

**BLUE AND PURPLE: OPTIMIZING THE COMMAND AND  
CONTROL OF FORWARD DEPLOYED  
NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE**

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE**

by

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B.S., Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee, 1985**

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This study examines naval special warfare's roles, missions, and command structures from various periods in its evolution to determine a set of principles for effective and efficient command and control. The study examines selected case studies utilizing joint publication 3-05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations, as the framework for analysis. The case studies examined include World War II and the formation of underwater demolition teams (UDT); the Korean War and UDT's initial raids ashore; Vietnam and the creation of SEALs; Operations Earnest Will, Just Cause and Desert Shield/Storm; and concludes with current theater special operations command (SOC) and fleet taskings.

The analysis reveals two primary requirements for effective and efficient command and control of naval special warfare forces. The first requirement is a command and control structure that can coordinate and integrate with conventional and unconventional supporting assets. The second requirement is a formalized mechanism to ensure that employed forces are designed, organized, and integrated in support of the theater commander's operational or strategic objectives. The study concludes that past commanders most effectively exercised these principles by assigning in theater naval special warfare assets under the command and control of a single, forward deployed senior officer responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of assigned roles and missions.

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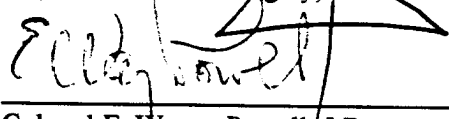
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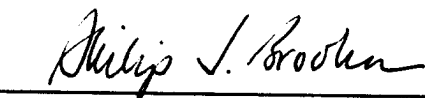
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

BLUE AND PURPLE: OPTIMIZING THE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF FORWARD  
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This study examines naval special warfare's roles, missions, and command structures from various periods in its evolution to determine a set of principles for effective and efficient command and control. The study examines selected case studies utilizing joint publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, as the framework for analysis. The case studies examined include World War II and the formation of underwater demolition teams (UDT); the Korean War and UDT's initial raids ashore; Vietnam and the creation of SEALs; Operations Earnest Will, Just Cause, and Desert Shield/Storm; and concludes with current theater special operations command (SOC) and fleet taskings.

The analysis reveals two primary requirements for effective and efficient command and control of naval special warfare forces. The first requirement is a command and control structure that can coordinate and integrate with conventional and unconventional supporting assets. The second requirement is a formalized mechanism to ensure that employed forces are designed, organized, and integrated in support of the theater commander's operational or strategic objectives. The study concludes that past commanders most effectively exercised these principles by assigning in theater naval special warfare assets under the command and control of a single, forward deployed senior officer responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of assigned roles and missions.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADDU	Additional Duty
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command/Component
AFSOF	Air Force Special Operations Forces
AO	Area of Operation
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ARG	Amphibious Ready Group
ARSOC	Army Special Operations Command/Component
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASD (SO/LIC)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict)
BSU	Boat Support Unit
BUD/S	Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL
C2W	Command and Control Warfare
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence
CA	Civil Affairs
CAS	Close Air Support
CATF	Commander, Amphibious Task Force
CBT	Combating Terrorism
CCRAK	Commander, Covert, Clandestine, and Related Activities

CD	Counter Drug
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	Commander in Chief
CINCEUR	Commander in Chief, Europe
CINCFE	Commander in Chief, Far East
CINCPACLANT	Commander in Chief, Atlantic
CINCPACFLT	Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CM	Countermine
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
COCOM	Combatant Command
COMNAVFE	Commander, Naval Forces, Far East
COMNAVFORV	Commander, Naval Forces Vietnam
COMNAVSPECWARCOM	Commander, Naval Special Warfare Command
COMPHIBPAC	Commander, Amphibious Forces Pacific
COMSOC	Commander, Special Operations Command
CONUS	Continental United States
CP	Counterproliferation
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue
CS/CSS	Combat Support/Combat Service Support
CT	Counterterrorism
CTG	Commander, Task Group
CVBG	Carrier Battle Group
DA	Direct Action

DDS	Dry Deck Shelter
DOD	Department of Defense
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FEC/LD	Far East Command Liaison Detachment
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
GW	Guerrilla Warfare
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HAL	Helicopter, Attack, Light
HUMINT	Human Intelligence, Human Resources Intelligence
IFOR	Implementation Force
IW	Information Warfare
JANET	Joint Army-Navy Experimental and Testing Board
JCET	Joint Combined Exercise for Training
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSOA	Joint Special Operations Agency or Joint Special Operations Area
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
JSRC	Joint Search and Rescue Center
JTCB	Joint Target Coordination Board
JTF	Joint Task Force
JV	Joint Vision
KFIA	King Fahd International Airport
LAMPS	Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System
LDNN	Lien Doc Nguoi Nhia

LIC	Low Intensity Conflict
LNO	Liaison Officer
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV-SOG	Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Studies and Observation Group
MCM	Mine Countermeasures
MEF	Middle East Forces
MFP-11	Major Funding Program 11
MIO	Maritime Interdiction Operation
MRF	Mobile Riverine Force
MST	Mobile Support Team
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NAVCENT	Naval Forces Central
NAVFOR	Naval Forces
NAVINSWARGRU	Naval Inshore Warfare Group
NAVSOC	Naval Special Operations Command/Component
NAVSO	Naval Special Operations Forces
NAVSPECWARCOM	Naval Special Warfare Command
NCA	National Command Authorities
NCDU	Naval Combat Demolition Unit
NEO	Noncombatant Evacuation Operations
NSW	Naval Special Warfare
NSWG	Naval Special Warfare Group
NSWTG	Naval Special Warfare Task Group

NSWTU	Naval Special Warfare Task Unit
NSWU	Naval Special Warfare Unit
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OPCON	Operational Control
OPLAN	Operations Plan
OPSEC	Operations Security
OSC	On-Scene Commander
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PC	Patrol, Coastal
PCF	Patrol, Craft, Fast (Swift Boat)
PDF	Panamanian Defense Forces
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PTF	Patrol, Torpedo, Fast
ROE	Rules of Engagement
ROK	Republic of Korea
RSSZ	Rung Sat Special Zone
SACO	Sino-American Cooperative Organization
SBU	Special Boat Unit
SDV	SEAL Delivery Vehicle or Swimmer Delivery Vehicle
SEAL	Sea, Air, Land (individuals or organizations)
SF	Special Forces
SO	Special Operations
SOC	Special Operations Command

SOCCENT	Special Operations Command, Central Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOG	Special Operations Group or Special Observation Group
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SR	Special Reconnaissance
TACC	Tactical Air Command Center
TACON	Tactical Control
TF	Task Force
TG	Task Group
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
TU	Task Unit
UBA	Underwater Breathing Apparatus
UDT	Underwater Demolition Team
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
U.S.	United States
USCINCSOC	Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VAL	Fixed Wing, Attack, Light
VBSS	Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure
VC	Viet Cong
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The Romans said, "If you would have peace, you must be prepared for war." And while we pray for Peace, we can never forget that organization, no less than a bayonet or aircraft carrier, is a weapon of war. We owe it to our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, and our marines to ensure that this weapon is lean enough, flexible enough, and tough enough to help them win.<sup>1</sup>

Congressman Bill Nichols of Alabama, Congressional Records

Discussing militaries in periods of peace, Michael Howard, the noted British military historian and strategist, stated "whatever doctrine the Armed Forces are working on now, they have got it wrong. . . . [However] it does not matter that they have got it wrong. What does matter is their capacity to get it right quickly when the moment arrives."<sup>2</sup> In 1942 the military realized that its doctrine for amphibious operations had no way of determining the conditions a force would encounter between the near-shore and high water line. It was after Tarawa in the Pacific, but before Normandy in Europe, that the use of swimmer scouts and demolition experts was adopted to collect this vital information.<sup>3</sup>

During the Korean War, the Navy would reluctantly task these same demolitioners--one of the only amphibious capable forces in theater--to conduct raids ashore behind enemy lines. Later, in response to President John F. Kennedy's challenge to develop a new strategy for engaging the communist insurgency in Vietnam, the Navy again drew from the ranks of the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs), creating a "different kind of force," a force with

unique maritime capabilities, the U.S. Navy SEALs (Sea, Air, and Land).<sup>4</sup> In each instance the men of UDTs, SEAL teams, or special boat units, organized, trained, and deployed into combat conducting the unconventional maritime operations not envisioned by planners during periods of peace.

Following Vietnam, naval special warfare forces assigned to U.S. Pacific and Atlantic fleets continued to support the Navy, primarily conducting its traditional hydrographic reconnaissance and maritime special operations tasks. In 1986, Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization Act (also known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act) and later the Cohen-Nunn Amendment, which specifically addressed special operations. As a result of these laws, and the DOD's interpretation of the laws, all naval special warfare forces were placed under the combatant command (COCOM) of the newly established United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Many senior officials and Navy officers felt that the law significantly challenged naval special warfare's role in support of fleet operations.<sup>5</sup> Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, using a clause in the Nunn-Cohen Amendment allowed operational control (OPCON) of designated naval special warfare units conducting predeployment training and deploying in support of fleet commanders to remain with the commander in chief's of the Pacific and Atlantic fleets.

The intent of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment and its means of implementation have over the last eight years changed the way naval special warfare deploys and conducts its operations. Since the passing of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment, unified theater special operation commands (SOCs) have become more robust, with a growing number of special operations forces (SOF) from each of the services placed under their operational control.<sup>6</sup>

Another result of the amendment is the addition of Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11), the most critical part of the legislation that created USSOCOM, which has significantly increased both the quality and quantity of naval special warfare training and assets. The command and control support structures and assets available to naval special warfare today are not the same command and control support structures or assets that were available in 1987. Also, the threats faced by today's warfighter are not the same as the threats faced by warfighters ten years ago. Theater commanders have an increased requirement for SOF to provide the foreign internal defense (FID) skills required to conduct prolonged engagement operations in support of their peacetime strategies. Naval special warfare has not traditionally focused its efforts on the "diplomatic" training or planning required to conduct these missions. Special operations has identified the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as a new direct action mission, and the Navy has adopted its new vision "Forward...From the Sea," which focuses the naval service away from operations on the sea towards power projection in the littoral regions of the world.<sup>7</sup> Both of these requirements will demand the traditional "warrior" skills of naval special warfare. What then has remained the same? And what lessons can naval special warfare learn from its past that are applicable to the requirements of today and tomorrow's uncertain future?

History has shown that introspection and self-examination are critical to a military's training and preparation for war. This study examines periods in the evolution of naval special warfare to determine a set of overarching command and control principles that have lead to efficient and effective use of naval special warfare forces. The study then examines how these principles can be employed to support naval special warfare operations in response to today's and tomorrow's operational requirements. In light of the intent of the

Cohen-Nunn Amendment, its impact on naval special warfare capabilities, and the communities expanding experiences in a post Goldwater-Nichols joint operations arena, it is apparent that a time for introspection and self-examination is in order.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study is threefold. First, it analyses how naval special warfare can support two commanders conducting operations in the same theater--the maritime component commander and the special operations commander--and achieve “unity of effort” without sacrificing warfighting capabilities.<sup>8</sup> Second, the study provides an analysis of how past commanders employed naval special warfare forces to obtain strategic and operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of their campaigns or operations. Finally, the paper provides a consolidated and concise reference of naval special warfare’s evolving roles, missions, and command and control structures.

### *Significance of the Study*

Joint Vision (JV) 2010 provides the conceptual template for how the military will posture itself to prepare for the future. JV 2010 envisions the military “channeling the vitality of its people and leveraging technological opportunities to achieve new levels of effectiveness in joint warfighting.”<sup>9</sup> SOF Vision 2020 responds to JV 2010 defining several key characteristics of special operations, and special operations forces, into the next century. Key among them are providing “core capabilities not available anywhere else in the military that are regionally orientated--culturally, linguistically, and politically--while remaining a rapidly deployable, agile, joint force.” A force that is “already there or first to deploy.”<sup>10</sup>

The Navy's "Forward...From The Sea" also sees naval forces, naval special warfare included, as providing "the critical operational linkages between peacetime operations and the initial requirements of a developing crisis or major regional contingency."<sup>11</sup>

Naval special warfare has examined the requirements of its warfighting commanders within the template of Vision 2010 and SOF 2020, and created its own conceptual template for the future, Vision 2000. The process of examination that resulted in Vision 2000 is one of the most serious and in-depth self examinations the community has conducted since the passing of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment. As a result of this self-examination, Vision 2000 proposes major organizational changes to its current command structure.<sup>12</sup> By studying past characteristics of naval special warfare's roles, missions, and command and control structures, this study seeks to provide additional considerations and recommendations to Vision 2000 and contribute to the current debate on how naval special warfare can best posture its forward deployed forces.

### *Scope*

The study focuses primarily on the UDT and SEAL team components of naval special warfare and its integration into the operational level of command and control. Various command and control organizations are examined against the backdrop of evolving roles and missions. The study begins with Scouts and Raiders, Naval Combat Demolition Units, the creation of UDT(s) during World War II, and continues into the present day arena of joint, combined, and interagency operations. The specific time periods examined are:

1. World War II (1943-45): Hydro-reconnaissance and underwater demolition
2. Korea (1950-51): Reluctant raiders
3. Vietnam (1964-68): Unconventional and riverine warfare

4. Operation Earnest Will (1987-88): JTF Operations
5. Operation Just Cause (1989): JSOTF Operations
6. Operation Desert Shield Storm (1990-91): Theater SOCs
7. Current Operations (1994-present): Theater SOCs and Task Group Sixth Fleet

### *Research Questions*

*Primary Question.* How can naval special warfare optimize the command and control organization of its forward deployed forces, and effectively and efficiently support the challenges of today's warfighting commanders?

*Supporting Questions.* Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, provides the basis for supporting questions. In general, joint doctrine's guidance specifies that special operations require responsive and unified command and control structures, which avoid layering of headquarters within the chain of command. Layering of commands is avoided because it decreases "responsiveness, creates an opportunity for a security compromise, and is unnecessary."<sup>13</sup> Joint Pub 3-05's guidance goes further to state that regardless of the commander exercising operational control, the organizational relationship should:

- a. Provide for a clear and unambiguous chain of command.
- b. Avoid frequent changes in operational command between commanders.
- c. Provide for sufficient staff experience and expertise to plan, conduct, and support the operations.
- d. Ensure that SOF personnel to be employed are involved in the complete planning process: personnel conducting the mission must be thoroughly familiar with all operational and support requirements, and required mission capabilities must match those of the employment force.<sup>14</sup>

The above criteria provide the framework for the following additional supporting questions:

1. What are the historical roles and missions of naval special warfare?
2. What are the overarching characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, of naval special warfare command and control?
3. What characteristics of naval special warfare are key to effective operations?
4. What are the current and future roles and missions of naval special warfare?
5. What is Vision 2000's concept of command and control arrangements for forward deployed naval special warfare units?
6. In light of historical analysis, does Vision 2000's concept of command and control support future roles and missions?

### *Methods and Procedures*

Chapter two provides background material for understanding the context of the research question. This chapter further details the events surrounding the Cohen-Numm Amendment that led to the formation of USSOCOM; the concerns of the Navy on the assignment of naval special warfare assets to USSOCOM; and the effects of the law ten years later. Chapter three provides the historical development of naval special warfare's roles, missions, and evolving command and control structures. The case studies presented in chapter three are analyzed in chapter four in order to determine a set of characteristics that are key to efficient and effective use of naval special warfare forces. JV 2010 and SOF Vision 2020 are also reviewed to determine future missions, tasks, and strategic concepts of

employment applicable to naval special warfare. chapter five draws from the proceeding chapters for conclusions and recommendations.

### *Limitations*

There is a large amount of classified material relating to naval special warfare and its operations. The majority of this information concerns tactics, techniques, and procedures used on highly sensitive operations. While these topics are classified, the overall command and control structures of past operations are, in general, not. This study concerns itself only with those topics that can be examined in enough detail to draw general conclusions without the use of classified documentation.

The majority of detailed and documented references to naval special warfare operations since Desert Shield/Desert Storm still remain classified. However, naval special warfare's current and proposed (Vision 2000) forward deployed organizational structure is unclassified. The study interprets from available research material the organizational structures in question and makes every effort to confirm these results with individuals actually involved in the operation.

### *Delimitations*

This study focuses primarily on the operational level of command and control. The level that links the tactical employment of forces to strategic objectives. Specifically the study focuses on the "operational art--the use of military forces to achieve strategic goals through the design, organization, [and] integration" of naval special warfare resources.

The study does not cover other service's special operations forces or special mission units, except when these forces were made available for support to the Navy, or where comparison for clarity is required. Finally, only forward deployed command and control structures will be examined. The complete study of naval special warfare's organization and structure is beyond the scope of this study.

### *Definitions of Key Terms*

*Command and control* is the "exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission. Command and control functions are performed through an arrangement of personnel, equipment, communications, facilities, and procedures employed by a commander in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling forces and operations in the accomplishment of the mission."<sup>15</sup>

*Command* is "actually separate and distinct from control. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel."<sup>16</sup> Command is "the commander's business; it is an art and requires judgment, experience, and thought, in order to bring focus to the organization. Command cuts across functional areas."<sup>17</sup>

*Control* is "the authority which may be less than full command exercised by a commander over part of the activities of subordinate or other organizations."<sup>18</sup> Control is "the business of the staff, but of keen interest to the commander and is more of a science than an art.

It is the process that regulates the functions of the organization. It operates within a functional area, directs and manages that functional area, and depends on data and status information. Control includes the technical means that enhance command. Control is based on common doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), control measures, communications, and computers.”<sup>19</sup>

*Direct Action (DA)* are “short-duration strikes and small scale offensive actions with the purpose to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage. Includes a wide variety of methods of employment: raid, ambush, or direct attacks; emplacement of mines or munitions; standoff attacks by fire; terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; sabotage; and anti-ship operations.”<sup>20</sup>

*Foreign internal defense (FID)* missions are “programs taken by the host government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”<sup>21</sup>

*Naval special warfare* is “a specific term describing a designated naval warfare specialty and covering operations generally accepted as being unconventional in nature and, in many cases, covert or clandestine in character. These operations include using specially trained forces assigned to conduct unconventional warfare, psychological operations, beach and coastal reconnaissance, operational deception operations, counterinsurgency operations, coastal river interdiction, and certain special tactical intelligence collection operations that are in addition to those intelligence functions normally required for planning and conducting special operations in a hostile environment. Also called NSW.”<sup>22</sup>

*Naval special warfare forces* are “those active and reserve component Navy forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called NSW forces or NAVSOF.”<sup>23</sup>

*A naval special warfare group* is “a permanent major command to which most naval special warfare forces are assigned for some operational and all administrative purposes. It consists of a group headquarters with command and control, communications, and support staff; sea-air-land [SEAL] teams; and [SEAL] delivery vehicle teams. The group is the source of all deployed naval special warfare forces and administratively supports the naval special warfare units assigned to the theater combatant commanders. The group staff provides general operational direction and coordinates the activities of its subordinate units. A naval special warfare group is capable of task-organizing to meet a wide variety of requirements. Also called NSWG.”<sup>24</sup>

*A naval special warfare task element* “is a provisional subordinate element of a naval special warfare task unit, employed to extend the command and control and support capabilities of its parent task unit. Also called NSWTE.”<sup>25</sup>

*A naval special warfare task group* is “a provisional naval special warfare organization that plans, conducts, and supports special operations in support of fleet commanders and joint force special operations component commanders. Also called NSWTG.”<sup>26</sup>

*A naval special warfare task unit* is “a provisional subordinate unit of a naval special warfare task group. Also called NSWTU.”<sup>27</sup>

*Operational control* is “the transferable command authority that may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command. Operational control is inherent in combatant command (command authority). Operational control may be delegated and is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational control includes

authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command. Operational control should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally this authority is exercised through subordinate joint force commanders and service and/or functional component commanders. Operational control normally provides full authority to organize commands and forces and to employ those forces as the commander in operational control considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. Operational control does not necessarily include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training. Its acronym is OPCON.”<sup>28</sup>

*Principal missions* are missions by both legislation and joint doctrine for special operations. These mission include: direct action (DA); special reconnaissance (SR); foreign internal defense (FID); unconventional warfare (UW); combating terrorism (CBT); counterproliferation (CP); civil affairs (CA); psychological operations (PSYOP); and information warfare (IW)/command and control warfare (C2W).<sup>29</sup> These missions are defined in detail in the glossary.

*Special reconnaissance* (SR) or surveillance operations are conducted to obtain or verify information concerning capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. Also used to collect data concerning meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics.<sup>30</sup>

*Special operations* are defined by USSOCOM Pub 1 as small units in direct or indirect military actions that are focused on strategic or operational objectives. These operations “require units with combinations of specialized personnel, equipment, training, or tactics that exceed the routine capabilities of conventional forces. Modern special operations forces have evolved in

response to the needs of the military and have an ongoing principal function of conducting special operations.” Special operations forces’ “organization, equipment, training, personnel selection, and tactics have changed as the threats have changed.”<sup>31</sup>

*Purpose of special operations forces* are to provide national command authorities with forces capable of spearheading decisive victory as part of a joint team-anywhere in the world and under virtually any condition. They provide unique capabilities not found in other elements of the U.S. armed forces or those of other nations.<sup>32</sup>

*Unity of command* is one of the principles of war: For every objective, seek unity of command and unity of effort.<sup>33</sup> Unity of command may or may not be one of the necessary steps to achieve unity of effort.<sup>34</sup>

*Unity of effort* is coordination and cooperation among all forces, not necessarily part of the same command structure, toward a commonly recognized objective. Unity of effort in joint forces is enhanced through the application of flexible command relationships.<sup>35</sup> Unity of effort is the objective of any command and control system, often defined synonymously with unity of command. It directs all energies, assets, and activities, physical and mental, towards desired ends.<sup>36</sup>

*Theater special operations command* are located in each theater and assigned to the geographic commander in chief (CINC). The SOC is a subunified command that serves as the functional special operations commander. The SOC commander is the JFSOCC and reports directly to the CINC. One example of a SOC is Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR), who reports to commander in chief, Europe (CINCEUR).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>House Armed Services Committee, “Hearings on the Reorganization of the Department of Defense,” Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 19 February 1986.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace," *RUSI, Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 119 (March 1974): 3-9.

<sup>3</sup>Francis Douglas Fane and Don Moore, *Naked Warrior*, with a forward by Richard Kelly Turner (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press), xi-xiii.

<sup>4</sup>President John F. Kennedy's speech to the West Point class of 1961.

<sup>5</sup>Captain Bruce P. Dyer, United States Navy, Retired, interview by author, 17 March 1997, Fort Leavenworth, notes, author's collection.

<sup>6</sup>Henry H. Shelton, "Coming of Age: Theater Special Operations Commands." *Joint Forces Quarterly* 14 (Winter 1996-7), 50-52.

<sup>7</sup>United States Navy, *Forward...From the Sea* (Washington: Department of the Navy), i.; and United States Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020*, 3.

<sup>8</sup>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 February 1995), A-2.; and Captain Robert Mabry, United States Navy, Deputy Chief of Staff, United States Special Operations Command, interview by author, 31 January 1997, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, notes, author's collection. Hereafter noted as Mabry interview. During the interview, Captain Mabry commented that naval special warfare may be "pushing unity of command at the expense of its warfighting capability." The purpose of unity of command is to ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander for every objective. Unity of command means that all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose. Unity of effort, however, requires coordination and cooperation among all forces toward a commonly recognized objective, although they are not necessarily part of the same command structure.

<sup>9</sup>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*, 1.

<sup>10</sup>United States Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020*, 4.

<sup>11</sup>United States Navy, *Forward...From the Sea*, 2.

<sup>12</sup>*Full Mission Profile*, Winter 1996: 45. Captain P. Toennies, Chief of Staff, Naval Special Warfare Command, interview with author, 7 March 1997, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, author's collection. Hereafter noted as the Toennies, interview. Naval Special Warfare Group Two's (NSWG-2) Strategic Goal Tending Group One (SGTG-1) was selected by General Wayne Downing, U.S. Commander in Chief, Special Operations Command, for the USCINCSOC Quality Leadership Team Award. As part of NSWG-2's plan for "Vision 2000," SGTG-1 was chartered to restructure NSWG-2 based on deployable and standard task organizations to most effectively accomplish operational taskings. Captain Pete Toennies, NSWG-2's commanding officer, chaired the team.

<sup>13</sup>Chairman for the Joint Chiefs, Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 28 October 1992), III-1. Joint Publication 3-05 goes further to state that normally operational control of special operations forces is exercised directly by a unified, subordinate unified, joint force, or service or functional component commander without intervening levels of command.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, III-1.

<sup>15</sup>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms with JMTGM* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1994), 82.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>17</sup>United States Special Operations Command, USSOCOM Publication 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War* (25 January 1996), 6-2.

<sup>18</sup>Joint Pub 1-02, 94.

<sup>19</sup>USSOCOM Pub 1, 6-3.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>22</sup>Joint Pub 1-02, 284.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>29</sup>USSOCOM Pub 1, 3-1 to 3-4.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-1.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 4-13.

<sup>34</sup>James A. Winnefeld and Dana J. Johnson, *Command and Control of Joint Air Operations: Some Lessons Learned from Four Case Studies of an Enduring Issue*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1991), iii.

<sup>35</sup>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1: *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 January 1995), viii.

<sup>36</sup>Winnefeld and Johnson, iii.

<sup>37</sup>USSOCOM Pub 1, 6-8.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

I do not believe that this record is attributable to persistent bad luck or an inadequate caliber of men in the armed services. In my view, we have not been effectively organized to fight the most likely battles of the present or the future.<sup>1</sup>

Senator William Cohen of Maine, Congressional Record

#### Formation of United States Special Operations Command

As discussed in chapter one, naval special warfare has experienced several major organizational changes since its inception in the spring of 1942. The most significant restructuring occurred on 1 March 1988 when the operational control of naval special warfare groups one and two changed from their respective fleet commanders (commander in chief Pacific fleet (CINCPACFLT) and commander in chief Atlantic fleet (CINCLANTFLT)) to commander, naval special warfare command (COMNAVSPECWARCOM). This change in operational control was the culmination of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment, which placed all special operations forces under the COCOM of the newly established USSOCOM.<sup>2</sup> In order to completely understand the context of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment and its effect on current command and control arrangements, one must examine first how Congress become interested in special operations; second, what was the intent of Congress; third, what was the Department of the Navy's reaction to the implementation of the law; and last, how has the law affected naval special warfare.

*Cohen-Nunn Amendment.* The Goldwater-Nichols Act of October 1986 did not originally address the special operations deficiencies highlighted by the results of the Holloway Commission's investigation into operation Rice Bowl or the lessons learned during operation Urgent Fury. Instead, the Goldwater-Nichols Act directed that a review be conducted by the DOD on the "missions, responsibilities and force structure of the unified and specified combatant commands." Section 212 of the law directed that this review address several key issues including "the creation of a unified combatant command for special operations missions which would combine the special operations missions, responsibilities, and forces of the armed forces." The law gave the DOD one year to conduct the review and report its findings.<sup>3</sup>

Congress never waited for DOD's report, and only a month later passed the Cohen-Nunn Amendment that created both the office of the assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict (ASD SO/LIC) and USSOCOM. The fact that Congress did not wait for DOD's report and passed the law so quickly makes it apparent that many in Congress had already made up their minds on the issue of a new combatant command.<sup>4</sup>

The provisions and mandates in the Cohen-Nunn Amendment are unprecedented. Congress had for the first time mandated to the DOD the establishment of a unified combatant command--a responsibility normally reserved for the President.<sup>5</sup> Why did Congress create this bill? What was its interest in special operations? Examining the events and the individuals involved in the passage of the bill give evidence to Congress' intent.

*Desert One.* In October of 1977, the German Counterterrorist Unit, GSG-9, conducted an extremely successful assault on a hijacked Lufthansa Boeing 737 in

Mogadishu, Somalia. The White House, taking note of the growing threat of terrorism, asked for assurances that the United States military possessed a similar capability. In November 1977, General Bernard Rogers, the Army Chief of Staff, activated a new Army special operations unit that would prepare for a variety of operations to include counterterrorism. This unit would later become the ground force involved in the 1980 aborted rescue operation in Iran.<sup>6</sup>

“On the night of 24 April 1980, under the code name operation Eagle Claw, the United States launched forces towards Iran as the first step of a plan to rescue 53 American hostages being held in Teheran by militant Iranian students.”<sup>7</sup> The operation was complex and high risk, pushing people and their equipment to the limit. At 0230 local time, in the Iranian desert, at a forward refueling point designated Desert One, the commander in charge of the scene made the tough decision to abandon the mission. This decision was forced on him when three of the eight supporting RH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters were, for various reasons, unable to complete the mission. As the forces initiated their extraction from Desert One, one of the helicopters sliced into an EC-130 transport plane carrying a load of fuel. The resulting explosion and fire took the lives of eight men. Also a significant amount of equipment and classified documents were left behind. These documents, left in the abandoned aircraft, compromised the mission’s in-country support thus preventing its use for a possible future mission.

In the months that followed the failed rescue attempt, a stunned American public endured the daily media reminders of the continued plight of the hostages and America’s inability to do anything about it.<sup>8</sup> This disaster inflicted serious damage to American prestige and pride. Later that year, President Carter lost his bid for re-election. Many

questioned the U.S. military's credibility and readiness--was the military a paper tiger?

What went wrong? Why did the mission fail? These were questions many Americans were asking.<sup>9</sup>

Immediately following the failed rescue attempt, DOD, under heavy pressure from the executive branch and Congress, initiated a board of investigation. The board was not the customary judicial board searching for culpability, but a review board tasked to identify only military lessons learned. Composed of retired and active duty senior officers, and chaired by retired admiral and former chief of naval operations, James L. Holloway III, the board became known as the "Holloway Commission" and results became known as the "Holloway Report." By the end of the inquiry, the panel had unanimously identified twenty-three issues that suggested errors in judgment or situations that required remedial action.

One area of concern cited in the report specifically identified the penalties of an informal command and control structure. The panel felt that the command and control at senior levels was excellent, however mid-level command relationships were not always clearly defined or understood. One example cited, relating to the effects of such an ad-hoc relationship, described how Marine Corps pilots questioned orders to abandon their helicopters because they did not know that the officer issuing the orders (Colonel James Kyle, USAF) was the site commander. The commission also determined that ad-hoc command relationships contributed to the inability to conduct a full dress rehearsal; allowed units to train in isolation from each other; and created a difficult means of distributing intelligence. The report concluded that "the absence of a clear-cut chain of command with tightly defined responsibilities. . . coupled with the absence of completely integrated training," precluded the task force from achieving "its full potential."<sup>10</sup> The panel's report

produced two major recommendations: first, the Defense department should establish a counterterrorist task force, with a permanently assigned staff and certain assigned forces, as a field agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; second, it recommended that the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider the formation of a special operations advisory panel.<sup>11</sup>

These recommendations were accepted and implemented in the fall of 1980. The Reagan administration took further action on 1 January 1984, establishing the Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA) with Major General Wesley Rice (USMC) appointed as the director.<sup>12</sup>

*Post Vietnam draw-down.* The establishment of these commands is a significant special operations event when compared to where the community was heading during the seventies. President John F. Kennedy's establishment of special operations forces as a means to fight communist aggression in Vietnam created considerable controversy within DOD.<sup>13</sup> Following Vietnam, the Army reduced special forces from seven active duty groups to three. The Air Force scheduled special operations gunships for deactivation or transition to reserve status. Upgrade or modification programs for the aging fleet of MC-130 combat talon aircraft were consistently delayed, and there was a complete lack of deep penetration helicopters.<sup>14</sup> U.S. Army special forces officers and U.S. Air Force special operations pilots and crews believed that special operations assignments were not career enhancing.<sup>15</sup>

The naval special warfare community had mixed feelings towards its component service. Like the rest of the Navy, naval special warfare experienced a reduction in its budget during the mid to late seventies and early eighties. SEAL teams and UDTs experienced reductions in strength from 300 to 150 personnel per team. However, the community's end strength was still greater than before Vietnam.<sup>16</sup> Within the Navy and

Marine Corps there were discussions about decommissioning the teams. Many saw amphibious warfare as an outdated tactic and felt that the Marines could and should be self-supporting.<sup>17</sup>

During the draw down, basic underwater demolition school (BUDs) continued to train recruits in both UDT amphibious support tactics and Vietnam type direct action operations. A SEAL platoon, consisting of two officers and twelve to fourteen enlisted, was thought to be too large to conduct clandestine operations, and too small for seizing objectives. In 1971, the Navy formed naval inshore warfare groups (NAVINSWARGRU) Pacific and Atlantic.<sup>18</sup> The concept was to place SEAL teams, UDTs, boat groups, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and naval inshore underwater forces under one commander. On the West Coast, the commander, Amphibious Forces Pacific (COMPHIBPAC), was dual hatted with NIWG. Commander, NIWG was to serve as the principal adviser to the amphibious commander on inshore warfare matters and to conduct combat and combat support operations in coastal, river, or delta waterways. Under this concept UDTs continued to deploy in support of amphibious ready groups, and SEAL platoons forward deployed to naval special warfare units, supporting the fleet commander in small unit direct action or special reconnaissance missions. By 1975 the NIWG concept was abandoned.<sup>19</sup> Naval special warfare groups regained OPCON and ADCON of UDT and SEAL teams. The groups were responsible for the training and equipping of platoons for deployment in support of the fleet commander.

In the eighties, the Reagan administration's increased emphasis on defense and counterterrorism had significant positive effects on naval special warfare. As a result, SEAL teams' direct action capabilities found a niche as an economy of force and force multiplier in

the Navy's SEASTRIKE strategy. Equipment was developed, or improved, to meet these new taskings. The Emerson Underwater Breathing Apparatus (UBA) was replaced with the LAR V Draeger and newly adopted French combat swimmer tactics, techniques, and procedures, which resulted in tremendous improvements in SEAL team combat swimmer attack capabilities. The Mark VII SEAL delivery vehicle (SDV) was replaced with the Mark VIII, which greatly improved the SDV's range, navigation, and payload capabilities. Supporting the new Mark VIII SDV were two converted ballistic submarines fitted to mate with a newly designed dry deck shelter (DDS). These submarines replaced the last special operations capable submarine in the Navy's inventory, the USS *Grayback*, which was decommissioned in the early eighties.<sup>20</sup> Naval special warfare officers were satisfied with promotions, and SEAL enlisted advancement and retention rates were one of the highest in the Navy.<sup>21</sup>

On the surface many of these improvements appeared to indicate progress, or at least the Navy's continued support of naval special warfare. However, the community received only one dry deck shelter between 1982 and 1987, and it was fitted to the oldest of the fleet's SSNs.<sup>22</sup> The community also lacked adequate small boat support. The SEAFOX, with the exception of the Mark III patrol craft (first built in 1973), was the only craft procured for naval special warfare following the Vietnam War and its ability to support special operations was severely questioned.<sup>23</sup> Naval special warfare continuously forwarded requests for patrol craft capable of conducting or supporting special operations. Years later the community would receive the coastal patrol craft (PC), a lightly armed small *ship* (emphasis added) with classic naval lines, manned by surface warfare officers, but incapable of supporting a complete SEAL platoon.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the dilemma for naval special warfare was to choose between a forty-five-year tradition of continuous support to the Navy or the potential (but not guaranteed) prospect of improved operational capabilities. Initially some senior officers saw little to be gained by joining with the other services and feared that their principal mission, support to the fleet, would be lost if they became part of an organization that was mostly ground orientated. Others saw a great opportunity to operate under a command solely concerned with special operations, vice a command that was engaged in blue water operations. Access to special operations aircraft was another bonus that could enhance the SEALs mobility and flexibility. Ultimately it was dollars and the ability to control its own destiny through the procurement and management of special operations specific programs and equipment that would have many officers saying in retrospect, "We didn't know what we didn't know."<sup>25</sup>

*Congressional Interest and Intent.* The point of Congressional interest for the reorganization of special operations forces can be traced to four individuals: Mr. James Locker, Senator William Cohen, Congressman Dan Daniel, and Ted Lunger. The fact that this group of individuals, with differing backgrounds, experience and agendas, all saw the need to change the organization of special operations forces is important.<sup>26</sup> It is also key to understanding the intent of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment.

Mr. Locher was the director, from 1983 to 1985, of the Senate Armed Services Committee's directed staff study on the need to reorganize the defense department. Published in 1985, the report looked at numerous conflicts in American history dating back to the Revolutionary War. The study also looked into several special operations cases such as Vietnam, Iran, and Grenada. What it discovered was a performance that was lackluster and not very impressive. The committee concluded that emerging threats such as terrorism,

insurgency, and other unconventional threats are not traditionally addressed by the services, who focus force planning on high-intensity conflicts. The committee also addressed the need for coordination among the services to reduce redundancy and create the ability to approach emerging threats with innovative thinking and new approaches. The study recommended the formation of a new command structure that was multifunctional, strong, and organized to address low-intensity warfare and special operations. This study was taken seriously by several members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.<sup>27</sup>

Senator William Cohen became interested in the reorganization of special operations after being approached by several credible former special operations officers looking for assistance in rebuilding their former community. In January of 1986, the Senator wrote in the *Armed Forces Journal International* of the need for a “clearer organizational focus for special operations and a clear line for their command and control.”<sup>28</sup>

Samuel V. Wilson, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Retired, a legend in the special operations community and considered one of the most credible SOF experts in the country, gained influence with Congressman Dan Daniels, another early proponent of special operations. As a member of the Holloway Commission and the Special Operations Advisory Panel, Wilson had recommended that DOD establish a permanent joint task force ready to respond to potential contingencies.

Next was Ted Lunger, a former U.S. Army special forces officer in Vietnam, who on returning to his branch, artillery, discovered that he had not “punched the right tickets” for promotion. With a bleak future he left the Army and eventually found a place on the House Armed Services Committee. A determined individual, he set his sights on the reorganization of special operations. It was this enthusiasm, however, that eventually cost him his job, when

Congressman Les Aspin, the newly appointed chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, fired him. Congressman Daniel was looking for a man like Lunker, and quickly hired him for his personnel staff.<sup>29</sup>

Congressman Daniel saw a parochialism in DOD, and a lack of creative thinking about the issue of special operations, especially among senior officers. In a 1985 issue of the *Armed Forces Journal International* titled "The Case for a Sixth Service," Daniel said, "As I watch the revitalization of our special operations capabilities proceed over the last few years, I have become convinced that the readiness enhancements and force structure increases now underway, while essential, are, in reality, treating the symptoms but not the disease." He detailed seven reasons why the U.S. should create a sixth service: philosophy, professionalism, budgets, continuity, unique solutions to unique problems, advocacy, and relationship with the National Command Authorities (NCA). His closing paragraph stated that "no amount of directive authority--budgetary or otherwise--will overcome that capacity of Service staffs to commit mischief should that be their bent. And so long as SOF remains outside the Services' philosophical core, the temptation to do so will be near-irresistible."<sup>30</sup>

*Implementation.* As expected, the assignment of forces to USSOCOM was not to be accomplished without some sluggish support from the sister services. The creation of a new billet for the role of ASD (SO/LIC) caused some debate between DOD and Congress. The physical location of ASD (SO/LIC) and USSOCOM became another issue. ASD (SO/LIC), after much difficulty, was moved into the Pentagon and USSOCOM found a home, not in the Washington, DC, area as many expected, but at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. However, it was the assignment of SEALs, generally considered as assets of the Atlantic or Pacific fleet, that created one of the more heated debates in the implementation of the act.

The new law stated that all active and reserve special operations forces stationed in the United States are required to be assigned to the special operations command unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense.<sup>31</sup> However, it also noted that the conferees:

believed that special operations forces now assigned to the U.S. Atlantic and U.S. Pacific Command and stationed in the United States should continue to be assigned to those commands. Although holding this belief, the conferees determined that the law need not specify such assignments. Section 167(c) of title 10 (as added by subsection (b)) would authorize the Secretary of Defense to make these assignments if he determines that they are appropriate.<sup>32</sup>

CINCPACFLT and CINCLANTFLT had OPCON and ADCON of all naval special warfare forces. Therefore Congress was not going to make the decision on the assignment of naval special warfare forces to USSOCOM. Instead it left the decision to then Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger.

Secretary of the Navy James H. Webb, Jr., “strongly recommended that Naval Special Warfare Groups One and Two remain under the operational control of USCINCPAC and USCINCLANT.”<sup>33</sup> After a review of both arguments, Secretary Casper Weinberger concluded:

a. It will be very difficult for USCINCSOC to make meaningful improvements to the Nations’ Special Operations capability without Naval Special Warfare forces assigned. USCINCSOC needs the expertise and capability represented by the Naval Special Warfare Groups. The assignment of SEAL forces, if implemented in a way that wisely accounts for the Navy’s concerns, need not detract from their close and operationally beneficial relationship with the Fleet. Further, it makes good sense to assign all United States-based Naval Special Warfare forces to a single Echelon Two Navy SEAL flag officer such as COMNSWCOM (sic). Currently there is no SEAL flag officer with oversight responsibility for naval Special Warfare forces, operations, or programs; this arrangement is long overdue.

b. Naval Special Warfare forces are unique among Special Operations Forces (SOF) given the extent to which they are integrated with conventional operations and their heavy reliance on conventional naval platforms (ships and submarines) for communications, intelligence, and tactical mobility. Any departure from the status quo must fully recognize that it is a delicate balance that allows the conventional and the unconventional to coexist within the Navy in mutually supportive ways. I certainly do not want to drive a wedge between the SEALs and the Fleet. Therefore, if these forces

are assigned to USCINCSOC, we must take care to ensure that we do not inadvertently diminish the quality of support SEALs render to or receive from the Navy.

c. . . . Accordingly, I request that you take those actions necessary to assign United States-based forces of Naval Special Warfare Groups One and Two under the Operational Command (OPCOM) of USCINCSOC through COMNSWCOM. . . . In so doing, Operational Control (OPCON) of deployed forces and forces undergoing predeployment training or post-deployment reconstitution should continue as it currently exists to ensure effective support and integration of NSW with conventional naval platforms.<sup>34</sup>

When Mr. Weinberger left office, the Navy again raised the issue, restating the argument against the assignment of SEALs to USSOCOM to the new Secretary of Defense, Mr. Frank Carlucci. In a memo to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mr. Carlucci reconfirmed the earlier decision made by Mr. Weinberger. He also reviewed the memorandum of agreement between the Navy and USSOCOM and found it too to be in accordance with the guidance given by the previous Secretary of Defense.<sup>35</sup>

The Secretaries of Defense, in making their decisions, had three options: give CINCSOC sole OPCON of naval special warfare; keep the status quo which was OPCON to the fleet commanders; or a combination of the two. They chose number three. The deployment of SEALs OPCON to the amphibious ready group (ARG) commander was basically “grandfathered.”<sup>36</sup> This decision is the origin of what is today unofficially called “blue” and “purple” SEALs.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Congress, Congressional Record, 99th Congress, 5 August 1986, PS10540; and William G. Boykin, *The Origins of the United States Special Operations Command*, (United States Special Operations Command, no date), 13. This paper was originally submitted as a United States Army War College Military Studies Program Paper, entitled “Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Legislation: Why Was it Passed and Have the Voids Been Filled?” This historical background into the establishment of United States Special Operations Command, provides superb insight and information to the reasons and process that accompanied the legislation that created this new command.

<sup>2</sup>Naval Special Warfare Command was commissioned on 16 April 1987, and initially received OPCON and ADCON of Naval Special Warfare Center. That same day United States Special Operations Command was also established.

<sup>3</sup>Boykin, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Boykin, 4.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Congress, 99th Congress-Second Session 1986, *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News*, Vol. 6 (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1986), 6636. President Reagan's statement included the following: "I am...extremely disappointed that the Congress saw the need to legislate the reorganization of the Special Operations Forces, particularly in mandating the creation of a Unified Command, which has heretofore been the exclusive prerogative of the President as Command in Chief."

<sup>6</sup>There are additional events which demonstrate the lack of emphases placed on unconventional warfare and improving combined special warfare capabilities. Examples include: the Bay of Pigs landing, the capture of the *Pueblo*, the *Mayaguez* incident and the relative success of Israeli, British, and German special forces.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen E. Anno and William E. Einspahr, *Command and Control and Communications Lessons Learned: Iranian Rescue, Falklands Conflict, Grenada Invasion, Libya Raid* (Air War College Research Report, May 1993), II-3.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas C. Lovelace, "Unification of the United States Armed Forces: Implementing the 1986 Department of Defense Reorganization Act" (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 6 August 1996), 6.

<sup>9</sup>Boykin, 2; and Paul B. Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985) 1-3 and 96-106.

<sup>10</sup>Ryan, 119; and William H. McRaven, *SPECOPS: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 306. Captain McRaven illustrates an interesting example--the Son Tay raid--of what integrated training can accomplish. In the course of training for the Son Tay raid, many important lessons were learned on formation flying. The C-130 and HH-3's involved had to exceed their normal limits to complete the mission. Helicopters had to fly in the C-130's draft in order to maintain speed with the C-130's which flew at 70 percent flaps. During training all missions were jointly briefed and debriefed, with every element that participated present. Following the raid the Joint Contingency Task Group's report determined that this technique was beyond the normal skill of an average Army aviator, but if intense training was conducted the tactic was sound and could be used in future plans. Years later during the Holloway commission investigation, Lieutenant General Manor asked why the C-130s and helicopters did not fly in formation. He was told by the planners that the concept would not work because the air speeds between the C-130 and HH-53 were not compatible. McRaven identifies the type of repetition exercised by the joint command prior to the Son Tay raid as one of the pillars in his theory of special operations.

<sup>11</sup>The board strongly advised that future presidents should consult this so-called “murder board” before authorizing a special operations mission. The term “murder board” is used to describe a group of individuals not involved in the planning whose function is to make independent assessments on a proposed course of action.

<sup>12</sup>Boykin, 9. Many questioned the appointment of a Marine as director, especially since the Marine Corps did not have special operations forces. A source of more questions was the fact that the agency had no command and control authority and could do little with regards to funding.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup>Hill, John A., *Air Force Special Operations Forces: A Unique Application of Aerospace Power* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, April 1993), 1. Following Urgent Fury, Congress noticed that there were still fewer special operations aircraft than at the time of the Iranian mission. Congress continuously funded the MC-130H only to have the money reprogrammed by the Air Force and Military Airlift Command at the last minute--leaving the aircraft as its number one unfunded program.

<sup>15</sup>Boykin, 3.

<sup>16</sup>Dale Andradé et al., “A History of Naval Special Warfare: World War II to Panama” (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, July 1992, photocopied), 216. A study prepared for the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Forces and Resources Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict.

<sup>17</sup>T. J. Bosiljevac, *SEALs: UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 188. One of the most detailed accounts of UDT/SEAL operations in Vietnam.

<sup>18</sup>Joseph C. Leo, “On the Job,” *All Hands*, December 1972, 30-33.

<sup>19</sup>Dale Andradé and others, eds., 217. For a description of NIWG see “On the Job” *All Hands*, December 1972. No reason for the abandonment of this concept was discovered during the research.

<sup>20</sup>SDVs are free-flooding submersibles capable of carrying two to six personnel and normally conduct missions that involve special reconnaissance, personnel/equipment insertion/extraction, or direct action ship attacks. The dry deck shelter (DDS) concept--created by a handful of naval special warfare officers with the assistance of naval engineers--was designed to fill the void created by the decommissioning of the USS *Grayback*. The DDS was initially designed to be fitted on two former Polaris class (608) submarines, the *John Marshall* (SSBN-611) and the *Sam Houston* (SSBN-608). As this class reached life expectancy, DDSs were slightly modified in order to be fitted on the sturgeon class (637) fast attack submarine.

<sup>21</sup>Captain Pete Toennies, Chief of Staff, Naval Special Warfare Command, interview with author, 7 March 1997, Fort Leavenworth, notes, author's collection. Hereafter noted as the Toennies, interview.

<sup>22</sup>The submarine community, as would be expected during the cold war, placed much more emphasis on anti-submarine warfare.

<sup>23</sup>Toennies, interview. The Mark III patrol boat was procured in 1973. The Mark IV, which is three feet longer, but built on the same lines, was procured later. The SEAFOX program was seen by the community as a complete disaster. At that time, naval special warfare's boat program was dependent upon NAVSEA PMS300.

<sup>24</sup>The utility of the PC is still debated by both the Navy and naval special warfare community.

<sup>25</sup>Toennies, interview.

<sup>26</sup>Boykin, 5.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>31</sup>U.S. Congress, 99th Congress-Second Session 1986, *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News*, Vol. 6 (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1986), 6595.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 6595.

<sup>33</sup>James H. Webb Jr., "Assignment of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Groups to USCINCSOC-Action Memorandum (U)," Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 02 October 1987.

<sup>34</sup>Casper Weinberger, "Assignment of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Groups to USSOCOM," Memorandum for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 Oct 1987.

<sup>35</sup>Frank C. Carlucci, "Assignment of the Naval Special Warfare Groups to USSOCOM," Memorandum for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 29 Dec 1987.

<sup>36</sup>Captain Robert Mabry, United States Navy, Deputy Chief of Staff, United States Special Operations Command, interview by author, 31 January 1997, notes, author's collection. Overseas naval special warfare assets, such as naval special warfare units, also remained with the

fleet. Even in U.S. Southern Command where there was no maritime commander, Naval Special Warfare Unit Eight located in Rodman Naval Base, remained under the operational control of commander in chief, Atlantic fleet through a small naval detachment in Panama.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CASE STUDIES

#### Evolution of Underwater Demolition Teams

It has become apparent that present methods of removing underwater obstacles are not effective under assault conditions and that new methods must be devised.<sup>1</sup>

Commander, Amphibious Training Command, Memorandum,  
dated 3 November 1943

Many believe that the disastrous landing at Tarawa, where Marines were forced to wade over one-hundred yards through chest deep water in the face of enemy fire, convinced military leaders of the importance of accurate reconnaissance information and the need for a permanent hydrographic and underwater demolition capability. "There is no doubt that the debacle provided a catalyst for further development;" however, the Army and the Navy's establishment of training facilities for the Scouts and Raiders at Ft. Pierce, Florida in 1942, and the Joint Army-Navy Experimental and Testing Board (JANET), 2 November 1943, "clearly illustrate the Navy's [and Army's] awareness of the problem well before Tarawa."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before World War II the requirements for amphibious reconnaissance became apparent to military planners. This awareness was a result of larger and more focused amphibious exercises, specifically Navy and Marine Corps exercises conducted in Puerto Rico in 1938 and joint Army and Navy exercises conducted in New River, North Carolina in 1941.<sup>3</sup> In response to these exercises the Army and Navy established the Scouts and Raiders, a joint force tasked with providing the initial terminal guidance for landings on the shores of North Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Along with the Scouts and Raiders, a small unit of seventeen demolition specialists from the Army and Navy were assembled in Little Creek, Virginia to train for a single mission, to cut a cable across the Wadi Sebou River, near Casablanca. This unit was officially called a combat demolition unit. Following the invasion of North Africa, the commander in chief, U.S. Fleet, and chief of naval operations, Admiral Ernest Joseph King issued a directive for the establishment of naval demolition units, later to be called naval combat demolition units (NCDUs), on 6 May 1943 to destroy obstacles in support of the planned invasions of Sicily and Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Although landings in North Africa, Sicily, and Salerno met light defensive measures and few underwater obstacles, the Army and Navy thought it wise to better prepare themselves from unnecessary loss of men and equipment to underwater obstacles undetected by air or beach reconnaissance. As a result of this concern, General George C. Marshall and Admiral King established JANET on 2 November 1943. JANET's establishing directive defined its mission as "experimentation, development and realistic testing of equipment and techniques for the breaching or removal of underwater obstacles both seaward and landward of the normal grounding point of landing craft at the time of landing."<sup>6</sup> Eighteen days later at Tarawa, many military planners became rudely aware of the importance of this board's mission.

The difference between Tarawa and the landings in the Mediterranean was the combination of natural and man-made obstacles defended by a determined enemy waiting on the beach. In North Africa the French had put up only limited resistance. Early island battles in the Pacific, such as Guadalcanal in August 1942, had been unopposed on the beach. Military planners generally thought a landing conducted on a well defended beach was sheer suicide. However, an offensive landing against the Japanese defenses on Tarawa was exactly Fifth Fleet's plan.

Betio island in the southwest corner of the Tarawa atoll was to be the actual landing site. Pre-invasion planning was meticulous. Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, commander of Amphibious Forces, Central Pacific, and his staff produced detailed mission plans, parts of them dealing with tides and underwater obstacles. Planners identified reefs as the key factor, specifically, how much water covered them at high tide and could a landing craft make it close enough to shore? Intelligence collection methods included submarines circling the area to take soundings and periscope photos, and airplanes flying both high above the target to photograph vertical panoramas and low along the reefs to create oblique stereo-pair pictures. All these efforts could not produce the required data. Tidal prediction also became a major concern. Admiral Turner commissioned a committee of foreigners who were familiar with the island (the group was dubbed the "foreign legion") and tasked them to produce estimates on tides and natural obstacles.<sup>7</sup> Shortly before the invasion, Admiral Nimitz, still deeply concerned about the tides and reefs, directed one of his officers to form a beach reconnaissance and demolition unit. Precisely what this unit was going to do is unclear, but the question became academic when the unit, not being formed in time, could not participate in the operation.<sup>8</sup>

On 20 November 1943, the Marines assaulted Betio. Many landing craft came up hard on the reef leaving the equipment-laden Marines to wade ashore across a hundred yards of chest deep or deeper water. At one point during the operation a Marine Corps officer ashore cabled his superiors on ship "Issue in doubt." The Marines suffered 3,300 casualties at Tarawa--the majority on the initial landings. The lack of accurate reef intelligence nearly caused a major military disaster. An unknown difference of only a foot endangered the entire assault. It became apparent that estimates were not enough and in the future something or someone would have to go in ahead of the troops to measure the depths exactly and to search underwater for mines and

obstructions. Following Tarawa, Admiral Turner recommended the established of UDTs on a permanent basis in the Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

As UDTs perfected their art in the Pacific, NCDUs in Fort Pierce, Florida, were preparing for Operation Overlord. Success for this cross-channel invasion depended on the removal of an intricate network of beach obstacles. The coast of France lacked the reefs and natural barriers in the Pacific, but the Germans more than compensated with an array of man-made obstacles that dwarfed any defensive system constructed by the Japanese. Despite the awesome array of beach obstacles at Normandy, the Atlantic theater's initial support of NCDUs was lacking at the highest levels of command.<sup>10</sup> Lieutenant Robert C. Smith, officer in charge of the NCDUs, desperate for some leverage during operational planning conferences with Army engineer officers, requested British Major Richard Furbair, Liaison Officer to the Eleventh Amphibious Force, to act as the Navy's senior representative in order to give them "some rank in the discussion."<sup>11</sup> Not until May, when two nonqualified lieutenant commanders were flown to England to take command of the units, did the Navy realize that more rank was needed if they were to have any authority within the final planning stages of Operation Overlord.<sup>12</sup>

Initially no one knew what to do with these units. Without direction, junior officers, in particular Lieutenant Smith, a veteran of the Sicily landings, organized themselves and created realistic training areas to practice loading obstacles. The teams expended a great amount of effort developing methods to efficiently remove obstacles, specifically the formidable "Belgium Gate." Their hard work created new techniques, procedures, and equipment such as the Hagensen pack used to attach demolition charges to obstacles. Through realistic training the NCDUs also determined that hand placement of demolition was the best means of clearing obstacles. In fact, during the course of World War II, the scientist of JANET never developed a mechanical clearance method superior to the UDT and NCDU method.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the invasion military planners organized NCDUs into gap assault teams. The plan called for naval gunfire, air support, and amphibious tanks to cover the teams as they worked on the beach. Unfortunately on Omaha this support disintegrated right from the start. Naval gunfire had hit only a few of the German artillery emplacements and air support saturated the upper beach and the area above the dune-line but the sandy flats near the water-line were virtually untouched. Of the 100 amphibious tanks assigned, less than a dozen remained in action along the beach. Within an hour German guns destroyed those remaining few. To make matters worse, the infantry began landing on the beach before the NCDUs had completed their work. The frightened soldiers hid behind the only cover available, the obstacles themselves. Demolitioners screamed over the sound of artillery for the men to move as German machine guns mowed down both demolitioner and infantryman alike. NCDUs lost forty-one percent of their personnel on the beaches of "Bloody Omaha."<sup>14</sup>

On Utah, beach clearance operations went a lot smoother due to decreased resistance and better procedures, such as the use of larger more maneuverable craft and electric vice non-electric safety fuses. The fact that NCDU personnel completed their tasks under such horrendous conditions and lost no one to improper handling of explosives, is a testimony to the realistic and rigorous training conducted in Fort Pierce and England before the assault.<sup>15</sup>

*Development of UDT Command Structure.* Back in the Pacific, prior to operation Overlord and in response to Tarawa, Admiral Nimitz quickly approved Admiral Turner's recommendation for the reorganization of the six-man NCDU's into more robust UDTs. The new teams had a strength of 100 officers and men formed into one headquarters and four operating platoons.<sup>16</sup> The Navy also formed a tactical training school in Hawaii. In response to amphibious planners urgent requests for UDTs to support upcoming attacks on Kwajalein and Roi-Namur, the Navy gave UDT training top priority for equipment and personnel. Two Seabee

officers were assigned to command UDT 1, Commander Edward D. Brewster and UDT 2, Lieutenant Thomas C. Crist. Personnel came from NCDUs in Fort Pierce, Florida and volunteers from the other services. "From the Marines came officers and men with Tarawa experience; and from the Army, land demolition experts."<sup>17</sup>

As the war progressed, and as the pool of lessons learned developed, UDT training, techniques, and procedures improved. UDT began to conduct missions during daylight hours under the cover of intensive naval gunfire in addition to nighttime reconnaissance operations. UDTs eventually abandoned operating from rubber boats and on foot ashore and swam into the enemy's beaches offering a more difficult target for enemy snipers. Methods were developed for accurately recording soundings and producing charts. The new methods for placing demolition charges on obstacles proved so successful that JANET abandoned further development of remote controlled demolition boats. As a result of UDT's successes, specifically in the Marshall Islands during operation Flintlock, Admiral Turner increased the number of the units to match the increased demand for their skills.<sup>18</sup>

The coordination between UDTs and the fleet was not always perfect. For example during the Marshall Island landings as UDT 2 moved toward the beach late at night, supporting destroyer screening ships fired a barrage of star shells to prevent Japanese forces from moving under the cover of darkness. The star shells unexpectedly illuminated UDT 2's area of operation forcing the men to work under daylight conditions. There had also been serious logistical confusions that scattered personnel and equipment among half a dozen cargo ships and troop transports that separated men from their equipment and resulted in uncoordinated and ineffective operations. During early operations the UDT commander did not have direct communications with fire support assets and as a result covering fire from both ships and aircraft was inadequate. This lack of coordination was made evident during the landings on Saipan and Leyte where

planners assigned too many swimmers to each beach landing site causing confusion at Saipan and severe UDT casualties at Leyte.

The use of so many swimmers was questioned. Hydrographic charts at Leyte showed steep gradients with plenty of water over the few reefs in the area. The islands offered a wide choice of beaches for landings, many known to be undefended. Mines were the biggest threat. however, a typhoon had made the waters so muddy that swimmers would have been unable to locate them for days. According to the one UDT officer in charge, the operation looked like an assault wave and even if swimmers discovered serious obstacles destroying them would have been extremely difficult because the small boats, carrying demolition material, would not have been able to reach the targets through the enemy's fire. Intelligence knew of the lack of manmade obstacles and heavy Japanese shore defenses, yet the plan allotted no air support to the swimmers and the destroyers assigned to shore suppression were not familiar with UDT procedures.<sup>19</sup>

In September 1944, UDT received a full time staff officer. This small step toward improving UDT organization was followed by the establishment of commander, UDT (ComUDT), another Admiral Turner suggestion. Admiral Turner observed that "up to now, no general operations commanders and staffs have been available for planning and coordinating the operations of several teams, except on a temporary basis. This is not considered satisfactory."<sup>20</sup> Admiral Turner filled the position of ComUDT with Captain B. Hall Hanlon and assigned Lieutenant Commander Draper L. Kauffman as his chief of staff. Captain Hanlon was a top quality officer with a strong understanding of amphibious warfare but new to underwater demolition. Commander Kauffman was the original founder of the NCDUs and, along with Ensign Phil Bucklew of the Scouts and Raiders, considered as one of the founding fathers of UDT and SEALs. Admiral Turner realized that Captain Hanlon lacked immediate knowledge of

UDT procedures and advised him to be patient with the men of UDT and listen to his chief of staff.

*ComUDT and Iwo Jima.* Although the position of ComUDT was established prior to Leyte, it was not fully organized to influence UDTs' misfortunes there. However, by Iwo Jima, ComUDT proved its significance. "Captain Hanlon gave the new, scattered teams a needed central organization for coordination with the rest of the Amphibious Forces, plus [he held] the rank to make their recommendations heard."<sup>21</sup> ComUDT also went along way toward solving the previous problems of sufficient air and offshore covering fire. The staff was given its own ship, with accommodations for its staff, communications, and production equipment for developing underwater charts for the assaulting forces. Captain Hanlon did not initially change the method for actual beach operations but he cured one major weakness in UDT operations. "Very often the information for which the swimmers and boat crews risked their lives reached the force commanders so near H-Hour that it could not fully be used by the lower levels of command."<sup>22</sup> Captain Hanlon saw to it that rough charts were immediately drawn up and copied for regimental commanders.

One of the major recommendations made by JANET was the establishment of advanced training bases where demolitioners could train and remain fit before each mission. Starting in Fort Pierce, Florida class after class was instructed in the basic art of underwater demolition. As students graduated and filled the ranks of the increasing number of newly established teams in Fort Pierce, they continued to train in the advanced techniques being developed in the Pacific. Once a team was fully established it would be shipped to Maui where Commander John Koehler, ComUDT training officer, "molded the ruggedly trained Fort Pierce units, green in the ways of naval tactics, into effective fighting forces. Drawing on his own UDT combat experience, and that of teams moving ever closer to Japan, he constantly wrote and rewrote the basic operational

doctrine, until sound UDT tactics were devised.”<sup>23</sup> From Maui forces designated to support landings on Iwo Jima sailed to Ulithi where ComUDT had set up a base for advanced training. A total of four teams were sent to Ulithi for final training and rehearsals conducted under Captain Hanlon’s immediate supervision. A total of two live fire rehearsals were conducted supported by the same gunboats and destroyers to be used in the operation.

“For the first time in a Central Pacific amphibious operation all pre-landing activities at the objective were under an amphibious group commander, Rear Admiral William H. P. Blandy.”<sup>24</sup> Captain Hanlon was designated commander of Task Group 52.4 under Rear Admiral Blandy’s Amphibious Support Force Task Force 52. Captain Hanlon and his staff prepared the master operations plan for UDT participation in Iwo Jima. As Commander, Task Group 52.4, he had tactical control of six destroyer transports, with four UDTs embarked, seven fire support destroyers, and twelve infantry landing craft gunboats--all tasked to support the conduct of UDT operations.<sup>25</sup> The plan contained minutely worked out time schedules for all units based on “Roger Hour,” the time when the landing craft with the swimmers aboard crossed the destroyer line enroute to the beach. The plan also included detailed fire support areas, positions, and overlays. Captain Hanlon assigned Marine Corps liaison officers as observers, which eliminated an unnecessary link in the chain of command. He also created a better system for distributing UDT intelligence to regimental assault commanders. In every aspect Captain Hanlon and his staff incorporated the same “deadly efficiency into UDT operations that marked the conduct of other amphibious units at this stage of the war.”<sup>26</sup>

The 19th of February 1945 was designated as D day. On 16 February Captain Hanlon’s flagship *Gilmer* lead the other transports toward the eastern beaches of Iwo Jima to familiarize themselves with the next day’s target. Higher command preferred the eastern beaches because they offered protection from the wind and had less possibilities for high surf. Also that

afternoon, UDT 13 launched a landing craft carrying Commander Moranz, three ensigns, and fourteen men. Their mission was to place an acetylene navigation light, an aid for navigation, off the small rock islet of Higashi Iwa located one and half miles off the northeast coast of Iwo Jima. While working on the island the team came under fire from a five-inch gun located in a wrecked Japanese landing craft. The *Barr* and *Pensacola* promptly silenced the enemy gun. While still under enemy sniper fire the team planted the light and paddled back to sea.

On 17 February the agenda for the day included fighter attacks against the coastline of Chichi Jima, minesweeping operations off the eastern beaches, B-24 bombing runs, and UDT reconnaissance missions off the eastern and western beaches. The eastern beach was UDT's first target. Bombardment ships were positioned off Iwo by 0700 and minesweeping operations began at 0803. The *Pensacola* silenced several enemy positions for the minesweepers but received six hits from 4.7- or 6-inch shells that forced her to retire to fight fires and treat casualties. She later returned to finish her mission. At 0911 the battleships of Task Force 54, the *Idaho*, *Nevada*, and *Tennessee* placed direct fire against assigned targets. By 1025 Admiral Blandy retired the battleships and minesweepers to make way for UDT operations.

At 1030 seven destroyers moved to a position 3,000 yards off the beach, with the battleships and cruisers keeping up a slow, deliberate fire from farther out. Behind the destroyers, the four UDTs loaded twelve landing craft launched from the *Bull*, *Bates*, *Barr*, and *Blessman*. Each landing craft was filled with its boat crew and ten swimmers caked with cocoa butter for warmth against the cool water. "Aboard the *Gilmer*, Captain Hanlon took tactical control of all the destroyers, gunboats, and transports. His chief staff officer Commander Kauffman would run the beach operations as commander of the Underwater Demolition Unit."<sup>27</sup>

As the landing craft approached the beaches, gunboats took up their stations 2,000 yards off the beach while planes overhead strafed the coastline. The Japanese quickly fired upon the

gunboats. The destroyers returned supporting fire with forty millimeter and five-inch guns. The landing craft moved through the gunboats to drop the swimmers 500 yards off the beach. The operation must have looked like a genuine landing because the Japanese opened up with heavy guns that had been concealed during the two months of pre-invasion attacks. What had been planned as a normal UDT mission turned into a successful feint of "great consequence" and has been described as "unquestionably the most significant role ever played by the bold underwater swimmers and their close covering gunboats in the course of the Pacific War."<sup>28</sup> Of the twelve gunboats, eleven were hit and put out of action, and one was sunk. The actual swimming survey, however, continued on schedule.

Swimmers entered the cool water and slowly swam toward the shore staying underwater as much as possible to avoid small arms fire and search for mines. A single mine was found at three fathoms but the swimmer was carried away by the currents before he could reach it. When the swimmers reached the beach they swam parallel to the shoreline looking for mines and obstacles and taking soil samples. Finishing their job the swimmers then headed back to sea. Off another beach additional swimmers from UDT twelve marked the shallows around Futasu Rock. All but one swimmer were recovered.

Aboard the landing craft "officers collected reports and met aboard the *Gilmer* to chart the results: good approach depths for all beaches to the shore line; no underwater obstacles or mines; good destruction of known defenses; and the exact locations of important gun positions newly revealed."<sup>29</sup> The staff studied the soil samples and after much debate determined that enough small particles (fines) were present among the larger slippery grains to support all types of vehicles.<sup>30</sup>

With the mission on the eastern beaches completed and all but one gunboat destroyed, Captain Hanlon faced the immediate problem of how to support the mission on the western

beaches. Quickly making adjustments to the plan, he requested planes to drop smoke on the beaches, destroyers to fire white phosphorus shells, and close gunfire support from heavy ships and destroyers. Admiral Blandy agreed and directed the *Tennessee*, *Arkansas*, *Texas*, and *Tuscaloosa* to cover the swimmers. Fresh platoons loaded the landing craft and the swimmers entered the water covered by smoke and covering fire. The swimmers completed their mission and landing craft safely recovered all personnel. Swimmers reported the western beaches clear but its approaches were less favorable than the east coast. One swim pair destroyed the only mine discovered. With no obstacles to destroy, the mission planned for the next day would not be required. Onboard the *Gilmer* staff officers produced 300 copies of master charts and reports. With their reports in hand UDT officers and Marine Corps observers loaded fast transports to meet with Admiral Turner's transport groups. The commander of each assault regiment received a UDT officer's eyewitness description of his respective beach area accompanied by accurate charts one full day prior to the assault. "Captain Hanlon's innovations were paying dividends."<sup>31</sup>

Following the initial landings, the men of UDT continued to clear over a hundred wrecked landing craft from the secured beaches and disarmed Japanese landmines and booby traps, ensuring that supplies could be moved ashore and casualties evacuated. Captain Hanlon and his staff went on to plan for landings on Okinawa and Japan itself. For the landings on Okinawa he had ten one-hundred man teams, fourteen high speed destroyer transports, and more than twenty destroyers and gunboats under his tactical control. It was apparent that UDT had come a long way from the days of scrounging for steel to practice demolition procedures or inviting foreign officers to give them added visibility during Operation Overlord planning conferences. With the support of senior officers like Admiral Turner and the operational level planning expertise of Captain Hanlon, UDTs were able to produce detailed operation orders that saved lives and ensured the success of future operations. The operations orders written by

Captain Hanlon for the UDTs at Iwo Jima lead to the further refinements for Okinawa's operation order. This later operation order "which Captain Hanlon wrote . . . was a masterpiece of detailed planning, giving the teams the best protection they had ever received. Many lives were saved by this plan, which is still used as a guide in UDT training."<sup>32</sup>

#### Reluctant Raiders: UDT Goes Ashore

Although Korean employment of UDTs for on-shore demolition raids was necessitated by urgent circumstances, such employment should not set a precedent for normal amphibious situations. Except in such emergency cases, UDT personnel as organized, trained and employed by present doctrine, should not be committed to hazardous or unorthodox tasks which may jeopardize their primary function.<sup>33</sup>

USPACFLTOPS, Korean War Interim Evaluation Report,  
25 June to 15 November 1950

The title of this section, reluctant raiders, and the statement above support the fact that by the end of World War II, UDT had become an integral part of naval amphibious doctrine. However, many of the roles and missions of the Scouts and Raiders, NCDUs, and the OSS Maritime Units had not been officially assumed doctrinally by UDT. Although the Navy established UDTs originally to clear obstacles, many observed, including the JANET board, that they were most valuable as reconnaissance teams. The Navy limited the development of UDT doctrine to beach reconnaissance and obstacle clearance in support of amphibious operations. In doing so, it overlooked the requirement to address additional missions, such as those conducted by the seventeen man combat demolition unit during operation Torch, allied and axis combat swimmer attacks in the Mediterranean, and unconventional warfare operations conducted by Naval Group China.<sup>34</sup> UDT's doctrine, command and control, manning, and training primarily focused on amphibious operations. However, UDT did experiment with other tactics, techniques, and procedures for various missions, specifically in regards to submarine insertions,

SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus), and to a lesser extent, over the beach direct action missions.

On a few occasions during World War II the teams had used submarines for clandestine insertions. With the rapid development of radar and other devices it became apparent that “the days of secret approach to an enemy beach by any surface vessel or airplane [were] over,” making submarine insertion even more important.<sup>35</sup> During the five years between World War II and Korea teams routinely deployed to areas such as the Marianas Islands to train in submarine techniques. In time these techniques soon became a standard part of UDT operations. The Navy also used UDT personnel to test miniature submarines. Drawing from lessons learned by the Italians and Germans earlier in World War II, the Navy envisioned miniature submarines conducting special missions under the control of the submarine force. SCUBA also became a standard part of UDT training. The teams conducted test and evaluation missions with numerous types of SCUBA and cold water suits in various locations throughout the world including the North and South Poles.

UDT organization following World War II also changed. “Officers trained in UDT techniques were difficult to find.”<sup>36</sup> Three of the four teams lacked commanding officers with UDT experience. Only UDT 2 had an experienced commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Francis D. Fane. Commander Fane also doubled as Commander, Underwater Demolition Teams, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Under this command he only had approximately 100 men. The Navy filled the gap in qualified UDT officers by assigning ‘non-qualified’ fleet officers from outside the UDT community. To address the shortage of personnel the Navy divided the one-hundred man UDTs into two separate elements called UDT units or UDTUs. Dividing the teams enabled commanders to task teams to perform multiple tasks but according to team commanders it mitigated “against efficient administrative, caused inadequate supply [to] elements, decreased

operational ability, and lowered team morale.”<sup>37</sup> These findings were similar to those described by the JANET board during World War II, which stated that community leaders felt that each team should be based ashore in the forward operating area and from these forward operating areas each team could then be assigned specific missions. In general, team commanders thought that training, physical conditioning, and maintenance of equipment could be better accomplished if the unit remained under a single commander. One commander wrote that:

UDT should be trained and employed as an integral unit, elements of which can be organized and equipped for special operations as required. The control and assignment of all detachments of a UDT must be vested in the Commanding Officer directly through the UDT Commander.<sup>38</sup>

Thus it was with a questionable command and control structure, inadequate number of qualified personnel in key positions, and unclear doctrine to support collateral missions that UDT entered the Korean War.

The roles and missions of UDT expanded as the war developed. During the length of the war UDT conducted a wide variety of missions that supported not only the amphibious commander but the fleet commander, theater commander, and the newly developed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These missions included both standard hydrographic and reconnaissance, and demolition engineering, and new tasks such as mine clearance, agent insertion, attack of enemy fishing capabilities, and direct action raids ashore. While World War II doctrine placed UDT reconnaissance and demolition duties between the three fathom curve and the high water line--these new missions took UDT farther to sea and beyond the beach.<sup>39</sup>

*Hydrographic reconnaissance missions.* UDT's traditional mission of hydrographic reconnaissance in support of the CATF (Commander, Amphibious Task Force) remained an important mission and was frequently conducted during the war. One of these first missions UDT conducted supported the Pohang landings in July of 1950. The initial attack by the North

Koreans and the speed of their advance caught the U.S. Military off guard. Troops and supplies had to be landed quickly at Pohang because ports facilities at Pusan were overloaded by the frantic deployment of equipment. Admiral J. H. Doyle, Commander, Task Force 90 was appalled by the lack of available hydrographic intelligence on South Korea. The Admiral quickly formed an advance team composed of several amphibious planners and one UDT officer who happened to be in Japan conducting routine training with the Army in amphibious operations. The UDT officer flew to Pohang with the advance team and took soundings along the narrow channel and beaches. The intelligence this group provided proved to be extremely useful and vital in the selection of landing sites for the off-load of desperately needed reinforcements.

UDTs also conducted reconnaissance missions for landings at Inchon and Wonsan. During the initial preparations for the Inchon Invasion (Operation Chromite) the *Horace A. Bass* and her detachment of Marines and UDT personnel searched for possible beaches north and south of Kunsan. However, General Douglas MacArthur later ruled out these landing sites and Inchon was ultimately selected as the target. Although no initial reconnaissance missions were planned at Inchon, because the beach and its tides were well plotted, UDT provided reconnaissance along the mud flats in front of the sea walls, buoyed markers along the channel, and dove to clear ships with fouled screws. In other words they basically “greased the ways for the invasion.”<sup>40</sup> When General MacArthur and his staff initially feared that operation Chromite failed in its strategic purpose, UDT was tasked to conduct preemptive beach reconnaissance missions along the mouth of the Chonsu Man north of Kunsan. Later, during the retreats of December 1950, UDT conducted beach reconnaissance missions in South Korea, Tsushima Island, and western Japan in preparation for an emergency withdrawal.<sup>41</sup> In August 1951 a UDT

detachment from the *Weiss* surveyed the Yesong river to allow bombarding ships to penetrate upstream and fire on Yonan.<sup>42</sup>

*Mine warfare missions.* Between World War II and the Korean War the mine warfare branch of the Navy suffered from postwar neglect. This neglect resulted in the disestablishment of minesweeping as a type command. Lacking a coordinating authority the strategic dispersion of the remaining minesweepers was poor and adversely affected the training and materiel readiness of the community.<sup>43</sup> As a result, on 11 September 1950 when advanced naval forces found mines at Wonsan harbor, the planned landing site for 10th Corps, they had no immediate means to address the problem.

Immediately on discovering the mines a UDT search party from the *Diachenko* loaded a landing craft to search for further evidence of a controlled minefield along the outer channel of Wonsan harbor. Naval aircraft spotted the mines and directed the search party to them and the field was identified. The following day thirty-nine carrier based planes dropped 1,000-pound bombs fused to explode at a depth of twenty feet on the field. Immediately following the mostly unsuccessful bombing runs five minesweepers, three steel hulled and two wooden, moved into the harbor. The operation initially proceeded smoothly and the ships cut several mines free, however, the situation quickly turned bad as the *Pirate* hit a mine and sank in four minutes. As the *Pledge*, the next ship in line, launched rescue boats she also hit a mine and then came under fire from hidden North Korean shore batteries. She too eventually sank.

As a result of this incident, the Navy created a search team composed of patrol planes, cruiser helicopters, and UDT personnel in small boats to locate and attack the mines. Also, local inhabitant were rewarded with rations and medical assistance for information on the minefields. The search team concept called for patrol planes, helicopters, small boats, and swimmers to locate and mark mines at low tide. Later at high tide ships would sweep the designated area, and

aircraft or UDT sharpshooters would detonated those mines floating to the surface. The primary lesson learned was to conduct a complete search before a sweep. UDT continued to support mine sweeping operations throughout the war.<sup>44</sup>

*Combat engineering operations.* During the winter retreat of 1950-1, specifically the evacuation of Hungnam between 11 and 24 December, UDT conducted amphibious operations in reverse. Instead of leading the assault and clearing the way for landing forces, UDT forces destroyed the Hungnam waterfront facilities, piers, cranes, walls of the inner harbor, leftover drums of POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants), and crates of ammunition, thus denying them to the enemy.<sup>45</sup>

*Unconventional warfare.* Agent insertion was another new mission for UDT. The long coastline of Korea allowed the Navy to conduct operations behind the enemy's lines. UDT conducted these operations, the majority supported by the *Begor*, a converted fast escort destroyer, at night along the northeastern coast. On the night of 2-3 June 1951, the *Begor* and her UDT complement landed 235 Republic of Korea (ROK) guerrillas on an islet less than half a mile from Wonsan harbor.<sup>46</sup> The CIA ran most of these underground operations under the code names of Salamanders, the Navy's contingent run off the islands of Cho Do and Simni-do, and Leopard, the Army's larger contingent run off the island of Paengnyong-do. These operations gave the CIA, newly created under the National Security Act of 1947, an opportunity to exercise its role in covert operations. Although outside normal training and doctrine, small boat handling skills and experience with onshore raiding made UDT a natural choice to assist in the conduct of these operations. However, the Commander of Naval Forces Far East (COMNAVFE) specifically limited UDT involvement by not allowing "U.S. Navy personnel or boats [to] accompany agent teams and craft the entire distance to the beach."<sup>47</sup>

Control of these unconventional forces was unwieldy. Liaison officers working within the Far Eastern Command had no less than four agencies or organizations to coordinate with just along the islands of Wonsan alone.<sup>48</sup> Although critics did not generally include Salamander and Leopard operations, smaller and more secretive groups caused enough problems that the Navy eventually ordered the “apprehension and detention of all unidentifiable travelers.”<sup>49</sup> Many observers, such as the British, voiced concern about the lack of coordination among the various groups, noting that there appeared to be no central controlling authority who was aware of all the various units activities. The result was that at sometimes the groups assisted each other with their action but more often than not they definitely hindered each other. By 9 December 1951, in response to a breakdown in command that had serious political implications, Far East command quickly placed all garrisons on the west coast islands of Sok-do, Cho-do, Paengyang-do, and Kangwa-do under the command of Far East Command Liaison Detachment (FEC/LD). The next day, Far East Command placed all unconventional operations in Korea under the authority of a new organization called CCRAK (Commander, Covert, Clandestine, and Related Activities Korea).<sup>50</sup>

The Navy support for unconventional operations grew because of the self-serving requirement for better sources of intelligence. As ground combat decreased in 1952, the war turned into a series of operations aimed at preventing the North Koreans from obtaining additional territory. In order to target enemy supply lines and forces the Navy required timely and accurate intelligence. To receive this intelligence Task Force 95 maintained almost constant contact with the various unconventional forces operating off the enemy’s coastline. Normally unconventional operators sent their intelligence through their chain of command. However, this information usually reached the interested commander too late to take action. The Navy

corrected this deficiency by placing intelligence liaison officers in various covert and clandestine activities to pass valuable information and improve the timely receipt of pertinent intelligence.<sup>51</sup>

One of the last unconventional operations conducted by UDT was Operation Seagnet. This operation attempted to disrupt North Korea's economy that was based on both rice and fish. UDT 3 under the command of Commander A. W. Sullivan, Jr., raided far up the eastern coast of North Korea, destroying ocean fishing nets. This was the last large scale operation conducted by UDT in the War.

*Onshore raiding.* Although unconventional warfare and mine warfare were not within UDT doctrine the Navy tended to support the conduct of these missions because they provided to the Navy with an ability to address immediate requirements (mine warfare) or support (unconventional warfare) that were not readily available. It was onshore raiding that concerned both Navy senior officials and UDT commanders alike. What concerned them was the success of these operations and the possibility for similar operations in the future. Initially the Navy saw the requirement for UDT to conduct raiding missions ashore as an urgent circumstance that warranted committing them to hazardous and unorthodox tasks. At the end of the war, the success of these raids ashore spawned several reports by both UDT and Navy commanders voicing concern that such employment should not set a precedence. They felt that the use of UDT ashore as trained and organized could jeopardize their primary function, hydrographic reconnaissance.<sup>52</sup>

What made these operations possible was Korea's geography. Korea is a mountainous land with rugged ranges spread from the interior to the sea. The main highways and railroads, on which North Korean was dependent upon for the transport of military supplies, followed the shoreline for more than forty miles and in some places clung to the cliffs at the water's edge. U.S. Navy ships and aircraft cruised up and down the coast bombarding bridges and tunnels,

strafing the long lines of military vehicles and trains, and even bombed cliffs to pour landslides across vital lines of communications.

Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, COMNAVFE, conceived the idea of organizing small amphibious raiding parties to increase the accuracy of attacks against the enemy's infrastructure. His plan called for a raiding party to go ashore and dynamite North Korea's supply routes. The Admiral's first target was in the vicinity of Yosu, an important seaport with an extensive rail yard forty miles behind the enemy's front lines. Lieutenant (junior grade) George Atcheson III, a member of the Pohang advance team, was summoned by Admiral Joy to attend a conference in General MacArthur's headquarters. This would become the first in a series of special missions for UDT that commanders described as being prefaced with the word "The Admiral wants a ten-hand working party."<sup>53</sup>

On the night of 4-5 August 1950 a UDT team deployed onboard the *Diachenko* to blow the bridges north of the railroad town of Yuso. Intelligence indicated that the bridges appeared to be a vulnerable target. The *Diachenko* launched a ramped landing craft, which then launched a rubber boat loaded with men and explosives. The patrol came ashore but was eventually turned back by a North Korean patrol that arrived, as if on cue, by handcar as the UDT personnel approached the target. The landing craft recovered the swimmers, one of which became the first U.S. Navy battle casualty of the Korean War, and returned to the *Diachenko*. The *Diachenko* completed the mission the next morning with a forty minute bombardment of the railroad yards.

Although this new concept did not initially achieve its objective, senior Navy leadership were not deterred. As the UDT detachment was returning to Japan, UDT 1, under the command of Lieutenant Commander D. F. Welch, was steaming from the West Coast onboard a converted fast transport destroyer, the *Horace A. Bass*, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Alan Ray. The *Bass* carried four LCVP (vehicle and personnel landing craft) with a capacity of 162

troops. UDT 1 had been conducting unconventional warfare training in Coronado with two platoons from the 1st Amphibious Recon Company of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade under the command of Major Edward Dupras. Major Dupras was a veteran of Guadalcanal and the Sino-American Cooperative Organization's (SACO) Naval Group China. The Navy quickly agreed to the concept of combining UDT personnel with U.S. Marines feeling that it would speed the development of an offshore raiding force. On 6 August 1950, Task Force 90 assigned the two Marine companies and a UDT 1 detachment to the *Bass* and dubbed the joint package the special operations group (SOG).

SOG was composed of twenty-five UDT personnel and sixteen Marines. The concept for the mission called for Marines to provide perimeter security and UDT personnel to provide small boat and demolition expertise. The *Bass* provided fire support and intelligence on enemy activities in the vicinity of the operation. Between 13 and 16 August 1950 SOG conducted three night landings that resulted in the destruction of three tunnels and two bridges.

During training and rehearsals in Japan the unit perfected its night raiding techniques. The techniques called for the ship to transport the team to within three miles of the beach landing site. At that point landing craft, with rubber boats in tow, would insert the team to a point about 1,000 yards off the beach. From there the rubber boats would silently paddle approximately 500 yards and UDT swimmer scouts would swim to shore and conduct a quick reconnaissance of the beach. If the beach was clear they would signal the boats to come ashore with their cargo of Marines and demolition. The Marines would then lead the patrol to the target and provide security while UDTs placed demolition charges. On several occasions the *Bass* provided visual intelligence that allowed the raiders to adjust the timing and routes to and from the target.

As discussed previously SOG also participated in various reconnaissance missions. One series of these missions, unknown to the men of SOG, was as part of the Commander in Chief

Far East Forces' (CINCFE) cover and deception plan for the Inchon invasion. After the success of the Inchon landing, planners, encouraged by the apparent ease which SOG conducted its raiding missions, planned for more. However, SOG never conducted these operations and by the end of 1950 the unit received a Navy Unit Citation and was disbanded.<sup>54</sup>

#### Vietnam Conflict

Each SEAL platoon in Vietnam did things a little differently from the other platoons. But every incoming platoon was introduced into its operational area by members of the platoon that had just been relieved. This way the lessons learned by the preceding platoon could be immediately picked up by the incoming SEALs. . . . The added advantage of getting introduced to the operational area by the men who had just been there gave us an additional edge. And that edge was used.<sup>55</sup>

Master Chief Boatswains Mate Rudy Boesch,  
*Hunters and Shooters: An Oral History of  
the U.S. Navy SEALs in Vietnam*

During the crisis in Laos in the late fifties, leaders in the United States realized that traditional military actions were not suited to engage the growing threat of communist inspired insurgencies. Many politicians and military leaders agreed that political and military attacks could be successfully countered only through special measures. This trend sowed the seeds for the U.S. Military's development of a counterinsurgency doctrine. The term counterinsurgency eventually was defined as embodying the "entire scope of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by or in conjunction with the government of a nation to defeat insurgency." With increased attention being directed to counterinsurgency the Navy changed its focus from a doctrine of massive retaliation to a strategy that could address the possibilities of limited war or "flexible and

graduated military response.” The development of a counterinsurgency doctrine continued in the military, reaching its apogee during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.<sup>56</sup>

The growing interest in counterinsurgency led to the development of components within each service capable of conducting the unconventional warfare mission. The Navy considered creating unconventional warfare units in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s and a number of officers working in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) were responsible for the development of these concepts and units. In March of 1961 memos from the CNO’s office actually mentioned the establishment of a unit under the amphibious commander that would become “a center or focal point through which all elements of this specialized Navy capability [in guerrilla warfare] would be channeled.” These proposed units, “designated by the acronym SEAL, a contraction of SEA, AIR, LAND...indicating an all round, universal capability,” to conduct three missions:

(1) develop a specialized Navy capability in guerrilla/counterguerrilla operations to include training of selected personnel in a wide variety of skills, (2) development of doctrinal tactics, and (3) development of special support equipment.<sup>57</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1961 the Navy, specifically the CNO’s Strategic Plans Division, continued to wrestle with the requirements necessary to develop a counterinsurgency capability. The SEAL mission statement proposed in March basically remained the same but placed more emphasis on the execution rather than support of combat operations. “Of ten specific tasks to be assigned [to] the proposed units, eight concerned the overt or covert conduct of operations.”<sup>58</sup> Also included in the developing strategy was a reorientation of the functional organization of the Office of the CNO giving the responsibility for guerrilla warfare readiness to the office of the Deputy CNO (Fleet Operations and Readiness). This responsibility was further delegated to the Amphibious Warfare Readiness Branch, however, the Navy Plans Branch continued to conduct the

strategic planning function. During the month of May several senior officers argued that because the Army was responsible for guerrilla warfare the Navy should not have its own separate training programs. These types of issues were quickly settled during a luncheon conversation with Admiral Burke, when President Kennedy, a strong supporter of the Army's Special Forces, stressed the importance of increasing guerrilla warfare training for both foreign and U.S. forces of each service. On 15 June, Admiral James S. Russell, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, further refined the development of SEALs when he directed that the formation of the units would be from within the UDTs of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleet Amphibious Forces.<sup>59</sup>

In the late summer and early fall of 1961, the Kennedy "administration began to focus on the crisis in Berlin, where U.S. and Soviet interests clashed and the possibility of armed confrontation was a distinct possibility." Vietnam was no longer the seen as an immediate crisis. The insurgency was still strong in South Vietnam, but no critical turning point could be seen in the future. Also, the number of armed forces in South Vietnamese had increased due to increased U.S. military assistance and Vietnamese manpower levels authorized by the Kennedy administrations. Many U.S. leaders felt that these and other measures would enable South Vietnam to control the insurgency problem. The administration and the military thus focused their efforts on immediate, conventional threats to internal security.<sup>60</sup> As a result, senior naval officers questioned the practicality of the Navy's involvement in counter guerrilla operations, and citing current force requirements, placed a halt to the establishment of the new SEAL teams. Instead, plans were made to enhance the capabilities of current underwater demolition teams.

In September State Department reports came in from Saigon that Viet Cong "regular" units had increased in strength from approximately 7,000 to 17,000 troops. It was

becoming more apparent that South Vietnam would not be able to defend itself. In October President Kennedy ordered General Maxwell Taylor to evaluate the political and military feasibility of direct U.S. intervention into Southeast Asia. The final results of this tasking did not recommend the deployment of U.S. combat troops but called for “other means of increasing the U.S. commitment.”<sup>61</sup> In November Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara promulgated National Security Action Memorandum 111. President Kennedy, through Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., informed President Ngo Dinh that the U.S. was prepared to sharply increase its efforts in South Vietnam. Following these events the CNO quickly authorized the formation of SEAL Teams 1 and 2 on 1 January 1962.<sup>62</sup>

*MACV SOG.* The first SEALs were almost immediately deployed to Danang as members of a larger Mobile Training Team (MTT). Their primary mission was to act as advisers to South Vietnam’s Coastal Warfare Force. One of the first and perhaps most famous operation SEALs participated in during the Vietnam conflict was the special observation group of the U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV SOG).

MACV SOG was the oldest of the CIA’s covert special operations programs assumed by the U.S. Military. SOG was created to conduct highly classified operations throughout Southeast Asia. These operations were very close hold and although they were technically under MACV’s cognizance all cross border operations were outside MACV’s charter and came under the control of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities in Washington. The commander of SOG was always a military officer and his chief was designated as a CIA officer; however, because of political in-fighting, the CIA never filled this position.

SOG was divided into study groups each assigned a specific operational plan called OPLAN or OPS. Examples include OPLAN 35, which conducted cross border operations;

OPLAN/OPS 33, which ran psychological operations; and OPS 32, which conducted aerial insertions of SOG agents and flew electronic and psychological operations. SEALs were involved in OPS 31, which conducted operations in the Mekong Delta with Vietnamese Lien Doc Nguoi Nhia (LDNN) or “soldiers who fight under the sea” and OPLAN 34A, which conducted commando raids against North Vietnam’s coastline.

The 34A’s raids into North Vietnam came under the code name “Timberlake” and were conducted using the new Norwegian built Nasty-class PTF (patrol, torpedo, fast) boats. These boats would patrol north and insert raiding teams or use their organic weapons to destroy coastal facilities. At first operations conducted between February and May of 1964 did not meet with much success, however, by June and July SEALs improved the LDNN’s capabilities and missions became more successful. At the same time that these raids were being conducted the Navy was also conducting its own missions, patrolling ships offshore to conduct intelligence gathering operations. These Navy operations were designated as the Desoto Patrols.

In early August of 1964, SOG successfully raided several North Vietnamese islands. In response, the North Vietnamese, thinking that these attacks were coming from U.S. naval ships operating along the coast, attacked the *Maddox* as it supported one of the Desoto Patrol’s in the vicinity of the Gulf of Tonkin. Following the attack, at the direction of the president the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Navy to complete the Desoto Patrols, even though the Washington intelligence community remained concerned that the North Vietnamese considered the 34A and Desoto Patrol operations as one. The *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy* continued to patrol the area with new rules of engagement not to come closer than twelve nautical miles of the coast or pursue attacking enemy vessels.

In the early hours of 4 August several South Vietnamese patrol craft completed a raid against a North Vietnamese radar installation and security port. That following night the *Turner Joy* and *Maddox* were again attacked by North Vietnamese patrol craft. This was the first open combat between U.S. and North Vietnamese armed forces. Although the Desoto Patrol and the 34A program were operations entirely distinct from each other in terms of command, forces involved, and mission, it was the increased effectiveness of the 34A program that prompted the attack on the Desoto Patrol. As a result of these attacks President Lyndon B. Johnson had carte blanche to escalate American's involvement in the war.<sup>63</sup>

The first non-advisory deployment of SEALs was detachment Delta in February of 1965, later redesignated as detachment Golf. This detachment was composed of a small unit of SEALs, three officers and fifteen enlisted, from SEAL Team 1. The detachment was tasked to conduct direct action operations in support of U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam (COMNAVFORV). Initially planners did not have a concept of how to exactly employ the group and it was several weeks before COMNAVFORV moved the SEALs into the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ), where the South Vietnamese government was conceding large sections to the Viet Cong, to support Riverine operations. Because of the RSSZ's close proximity to Saigon, it was imperative that the Viet Cong not be allowed to consolidate its spheres of influence and increase troop strengths in this strategic region. The decision to send SEALs into the RSSZ was a logical one. The area was well suited to a small, light, and highly mobile force that was comfortable in and around water.

After a few months the detachment became familiar with both the environment and enemy. Working from a naval facility located in Nha Be, the SEALs conducted ambushes as their primary tactic to engage the Viet Cong. As the SEALs became increasingly successful

in the RSSZ COMNAVFORV requested additional platoons. The introduction of SEALs into the RSSZ was successful because Viet Cong forces, which to date “had been virtually unchallenged,” were faced with an enemy that fought like them.<sup>64</sup> The ultimate result was that the Viet Cong could no longer move freely in the area.

Because planners initially lacked an employment concept the SEAL’s exact operational role “remained ill-defined.” Early operations orders were described by SEALs as “patrol until contact is made. Kill as many enemy as possible. Extract after mission is complete.” Planners also encountered problems with establishing areas of operations (AOs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Eventually Naval planners developed a concept for operations called the “SEAL Package.” The package called for SEALs to be augmented by a various array of supporting elements. The primary supporting elements consisted of boat support units (BSUs), Mobile Support Teams (MSTs), and navy fixed and rotary wing aircraft. The basic concept called for SEALs to be inserted using one of the above assets, which would then pull back and wait for the SEALs to make contact. If contact was made the SEALs would call in additional fire support and destroy the force or, if overwhelmed, be extracted.

The whole operation was usually planned, controlled, and coordinated by the platoon commander and/or his assistant. Usually one squad would patrol with the remaining sister squad (a SEAL platoon is composed of two eight man squads) staying behind to coordinate fire support and insertion/extraction assets.<sup>65</sup> The SEALs operated in support of a local naval commander, usually a surface warfare officer lieutenant commander or commander. The overall command and control of the SEALs and other naval forces working in the RSSZ and Mekong Delta was very loose. Much of the coordination for use of air assets and boat support was face-to-face and personality driven. Thus the dependency on other platoon members, men how had trained, deployed and worked together, was very important and developed a self contained insular group

where the Navy Lieutenant or Lieutenant (junior grade) “ran the show.” Tactically this arrangement resulted in great success; however, it did not create a mechanism that linked the tactical missions to an operational or strategic objective.

Over time commanders eventually realized the value of SEALs when they scatter the platoons in the RSSZ with a small support element. The operational objective was to use a small naval asset, which allowed the commander a form of “duplicity” by freeing a division of RVN with advisors and helicopters and in many ways created, both militarily and psychologically, an impact that was greater than the larger more conventional force.<sup>66</sup>

As SEAL operations became more successful it became increasingly more difficult for them to locate the enemy. The intelligence required to support operations was difficult to obtain. This lack of intelligence resulted in the SEALs, operating in the RSSZ and later in the Mekong Delta in support of operation Game Warden and its Mobile Riverine Force (MRF), changing their tactic from one aimed at destroying enemy forces to one aimed at capturing enemy personnel. “Capture became the preferable approach because the opportunity to debrief a live prisoner greatly enhanced the possibility of increasing the existing intelligence database.”<sup>67</sup>

*Strategic Studies and Special Boats.* Following the Geneva Accords in 1954, Ho Chin Minh realized that if he was to reunite Vietnam he would need to leave some of his cadre in the South and start an insurgency. During the Passage of Freedom that followed the Accord more than 40,000 people fled to South Vietnam, many of them not looking for freedom but sowing the seeds of insurgency. However, the North needed a method to provide equipment and continue to increase the size of its force. In 1960, U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence reports convinced political and military officials that North Vietnam was supplying the communists in the South. “Despite the agreement that infiltration was taking place, there was considerable disagreement as to how it was being accomplished.”<sup>68</sup>

To evaluate the extent of the infiltration and the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese Navy, Admiral Felt directed the creation of a survey team headed by Admiral Paul Savidge, Jr.

The nine-man team, officially known as the Vietnam Delta Infiltration Study Group, included senior officers from the Pacific Fleet, MACV, the Navy Section of the MAAG, SEAL Team 1, and Naval Operations Support Group, Pacific's new commanding officer Captain Phil Bucklew.<sup>69</sup> Just as the team began its survey Admiral Savidge became ill and returned to the United States. The next senior officer was Captain Bucklew. Captain Bucklew was not new to the Orient. He had served with Rear Admiral Milton Miles' Naval Group China during World War II giving him "considerable experience in intelligence matters and guerrilla warfare" and was highly respected for his insights into unconventional warfare.<sup>70</sup>

The group surveyed more than a thousand miles of South Vietnam and interviewed numerous local Vietnamese officials and military officers. The group also interviewed General Paul Harkins, then Chief of the U.S. MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) and members of the Navy. Traveling through the backwaters of the Mekong Delta and as far north as Danang, Captain Bucklew's insights into the Oriental's greatest weapon, patience, allowed him to understand how the North conducted its resupply. From the evidence gathered he concluded that the majority of the infiltration was occurring along a route extending "from North Vietnam, via Laos and Cambodia, with delivery accomplished via the Ho Chi Minh trail, via major rivers, and by combination of man carried and inland water-borne transfers."<sup>71</sup> The group recommended strengthening coastal patrols to create a virtual block from the sea, increasing the number of U.S. naval advisors, and assigning a riverine force to conduct "raiding and pursuit" operations. Many recommendations also addressed developing the relationship among various agencies to improve intelligence

gathering and overall efficiency, examples included coordinating the efforts of customs agents and river pilots to stop the flow of insurgent traffic along the inland waterways. None of the recommendations were immediately incorporated. However, the report “was a benchmark study that served to reorient U.S. military opinion away from believing the resupply of the Viet Cong was being carried out mainly along the littoral.”<sup>72</sup> It also created some debate on the issues and eventually every major recommendation would be carried out. Operation Market Time was one of those recommendations.

On 11 March 1965 Commander Seventh Fleet established Operation Market Time to shutdown the flow of supplies transiting down the Vietnamese coastline. The joint and combined operation involved a surveillance force consisting of motorized junks, inshore fast patrol craft ((PCF) also know as Swift boats), fast patrol boats (PTFs, of the Nasty and Osprey class), P-3 Orion and P-5 Marlin aircraft, and eighty-four foot or larger cutters. Originally Market Time was under the command and control of Seventh Fleet, however, in August of 1965 Rear Admiral Norvell Ward was named Chief of Naval Advisory Group, Vietnam, and overall commander of Market Time. By December 1966 the coastal supply routes, which had long been a communist avenue for movement of very important personnel and high value equipment, were effectively shutdown. As a result the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) relied even more heavily on the “ever-evolving Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Truong Son Corridor.”<sup>73</sup>

These are only a few examples of operations conducted by SEALs, UDT, and Special Boat Units in the Vietnam Conflict. As the conflict continued the number of platoons in theater dramatically increased. SEALs, UDTs, and Special Boat Units continued to support Navy and joint force commanders by conducting reconnaissance, ambushes, raids, and prisoner recovery operations. Examples include Operation Jackstay, the first

amphibious operation into the RSSZ. In January 1967, SEAL Team Two sent Detachment Alfa to the Mekong Delta. A second unit, Detachment Bravo, was sent to conduct and advise Vietnamese Provisional Reconnaissance units (PRU) in anti-infrastructure operations, sometimes in support of the Phoenix Program.<sup>74</sup> These detachments, unlike the detachments under the command and control of COMNAVFORV in the RSSZ, were under the direct command and control of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

#### Earnest Will

We will provide military capabilities not available elsewhere in the armed forces.<sup>75</sup>

U.S. Special Operations Command, Vision Statement 2020

As the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Cohen-Nunn Amendment were being implemented and the Secretary of the Navy was debating for control of his SEALs, the U.S. Navy was “engaged in a quasi naval war with Iran in the Persian Gulf.” The United States, which has a long tradition of supporting the rights of neutral ships to sail international waters, conducted operation Earnest Will between July 1987 and December 1988 in response to Iran’s increasing control of the Persian Gulf. During the height of the conflict Iran’s laying of mines in international waters and continued denial of such actions threatened to severely escalate the conflict or force the U.S. into a humiliating retreat.

One of the keys to the success of Operation Earnest Will was the use of U.S. Army special operations aviation units “to overcome specific U.S. Navy weaknesses.” Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., deployed these units to fill a gap in U.S. Navy doctrine and provide a capability to defeat Iran’s small boats covertly laying mines in the restricted waters of the Persian Gulf. U.S. Army special operations helicopters operating from naval ships

conducted this mission by flying night-time surveillance patrols in a high threat environment. During autumn 1987, while supporting Operation Earnest Will, special operations helicopters “executed two decisive actions that were instrumental in improving American military fortunes.”<sup>76</sup>

Starting in 1981 both Iran and Iraq attacked oil tankers in the Persian Gulf with the intention of disrupting each other’s oil export economy. In 1984 the war escalated in response to Iraq’s blockade of Iranian ports and Iran’s declaration and enforcement of a wartime exclusion zone. This exclusion zone encompassed the waters along Iran’s mainland and islands. Restrictive waters forced all tanker movement through the Persian Gulf to pass near the border of Iran’s exclusion zone and its territorial islands and oil platforms. Iranian attacks targeted oil tankers moving to and from Kuwait, a supporter of Iraq, from these positions.

The Iranians attacked the slow moving oil tankers primarily with naval mines and brown water patrol craft. The mines were crude but reliable, North Korean copies of the Soviet Navy’s M-08 contact mine. Each mine carried approximately 250 pounds of explosives. The patrol craft, Swedish made Boghammars and Boston Whalers, were manned by Revolutionary Guard Corps personnel called the *Pasdaran*. “These personnel lacked professional training, but were religiously motivated and politically reliable for Tehran.”<sup>77</sup>

By 1986, it appeared that Iran was gaining complete control of the northern Persian Gulf. Kuwait was unable to honor oil contracts and looked to the U.S. for permission to register its tankers under the American flag, thus allowing the U.S. Navy to protect its cargo from attack. At first President Reagan, whose executive branch was distracted by the Iran-Contra scandal and fearful of engaging in another Beirut type situation that lead to the 1984 Marine barracks bombing, was reluctant to support the proposal. However, by mid-March,

when it was rumored that Kuwait was willing to ask the Soviets for assistance, the President agreed to the plan. The operation was dubbed Earnest Will.

To protect the reflagged oil tankers, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) formed convoys consisting of two to four commercial ships escorted by one to three U.S. Navy ships. The passage through the Gulf took two-and-a-half days and brought the ships to within twelve to fourteen miles of Iran's wartime exclusion zone. Prior to the convoy's first deployment, Iran covertly deployed hundreds of mines using dhows hidden among the hundreds of boats transiting the Gulf.<sup>78</sup> As in Korea, the Navy discovered it had a serious weakness in its mine countermeasure (MCM) strategy. The U.S. Navy's strategic plan depended on other NATO navies to provide MCM assets, allies who were still debating whether to participate in the operation.<sup>79</sup> On 21 July 1987, amidst much fanfare, the first convoy sailed toward Kuwait. Three days later, on 24 July, the oil tanker *Bridgeton* struck a mine that tore a fifteen by thirty foot hole in her hull. To prevent further damage and possible sinking, the ship slowed to five knots. Because no mine sweeping capabilities existed in the convoy, the stricken ship had to lead her thin skinned escorts to the safety of a Kuwaiti port. The presence of U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, to the dismay of the National Security Council, did not deter Iran from attacking.

Two actions were taken in an attempt to counter the threat of mines without escalating the conflict. The first was to strategically deploy more U.S. MCM forces and enlist the support of allied navies. The second was to increase surveillance and patrol activities. "The *Pasdaran*'s ability to hide among the oil platforms, navigation aids, and mix with fishing boats and dhows at night made detection and attacking these craft difficult."<sup>80</sup> Originally the Joint Chiefs of Staff focused on using the Navy's LAMPS (Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System) helicopter; however, these aircraft were primarily used for anti-submarine operations and lacked the

capability to identify targets as friend or foe except by close-in visual recognition. For a Navy helicopter to get that close it would have to place itself in great danger to the *Pasdaran* boats armed with cannons and heavy machine guns. Admiral Crowe would later write in his memoirs that the Navy's helicopters were

not appropriate for the mission at hand. They could extend the eyes of the ship out twenty miles or more, but we needed aircraft that could do more than just say, 'There they are and here they come'. We wanted helicopters out there that could engage in a shooting match. But the Navy had nothing with that capability.<sup>81</sup>

The Army staff suggested using 160th Special Operations Aviation Group (Task Force 160) assets to locate and attack vessels laying mines at night. Task Force 160 had a wide range of aircraft with various capabilities and its pilots were well trained at flying and fighting at night. The aircraft selected to conduct the night ambushes were the MH-6 and AH-6 (Little Birds). Little Birds, very small helicopters with a crew of two and capable of 120 knots with a radius of 100 nautical miles, were selected because its pilots were trained in night vision goggles and possessed extensive low-level flight and weapons training. The five-bladed main rotor and four-bladed tail rotor produced a "subdued whirl, rather than the thunderous thumping noise of larger helicopter rotors." Systems onboard the aircraft included infrared radar, videotape cameras, mark 134 7.62 millimeter miniguns and seven round 2.75 in rocket pods.<sup>82</sup>

During the first weeks of August 1987, Task Force 160 deployed its helicopters and personnel to the Persian Gulf. The unit was divided into teams of three helicopters and nineteen personnel. The concept called for night operations launched from convoy escorts to detect, neutralize, and document mining activities. A comprehensive network was developed to provide army aviators intelligence of possible Iranian mining activities or other suspicious activities.

*Capture of the Iran Ajr.* In mid-September, Iran escalated its blockade attempts by deploying the naval ship *Iran Ajr* to lay mines in international sea lanes off the northern coast of Qatar. On 21 September, Middle East Forces (MEF) received intelligence that minelaying operations could be expected by the *Iran Ajr*. Rear Admiral Harold J. Bernsen, commander of the MEF, ordered one of his surface ships to remain near the suspected mining area. National assets tracked the Iranian ship into international waters prompting Admiral Bernsen to order the *Jarrett* to launch the Army helicopters and search for the suspected vessel. Prior to launching the crew briefed its mission as “find the Iranian ship, watch for suspicious activities, and keep the MEF informed.” Flying at 30 to 150 feet above the water the crews quickly spotted the suspect ship. Under the cover of darkness the team silently moved to within 200 yards of the vessel. The pilots observed the vessel with night vision goggles and onboard systems, initially noticing nothing unusual. The *Jarrett* ordered the helicopters to pull back. Ten minutes later the pilots noticed deck hands removing a tarpaulin covering rows of “cylindrical shaped objects” and pushing one of these objects into the water. The pilots reported the activities of the *Iran Ajr* to the *Jarrett* and within seconds Admiral Bernsen, aboard the MEF command ship *La Salle*, authorized the helicopters to fire.<sup>83</sup>

The helicopters fired flechette rounds that cleared personnel from the mines and machinegun emplacements. These volleys were quickly followed by a fusillade of rockets and mini-gun fire. *Jarrett* ordered a cease fire after just a few seconds. One of the helicopters returned to the *Jarrett* to rearm and refuel while the remaining two continued to observe the *Iran Ajr*. The remaining pilots observed crew members attempting to put out fires and arm mines in a desperate attempt to complete their mission. Unknown to the Iranians, the helicopter crews were transmitting all this information back to the *Jarrett*. On

receiving this information Admiral Bernsen again ordered the use of additional force to end the mining.<sup>84</sup>

With the *Iran Ajr* disabled, plans were made to board the ship and recover crew members, intelligence, and most important evidence of illegal mining activities for display to the world press. The MEF organized a boarding party around a SEAL platoon and at dawn the party boarded and cleared the ship's compartments. No Iranians were found onboard except for three dead crewmen. Nine M-08 mines were found on deck and another nine were found in the water. Later sixteen Iranian crewmen were found floating in the water and ten more, four of whom were dead, were found in a lifeboat. Onboard the *La Salle* interrogations confirmed that the mining mission was indeed targeted for international waters. A great deal of evidence remained onboard that detailed the location of other minefields. The capture of the *Iran Ajr* destroyed Iran's claim of innocence. On 25 September 1987, Secretary of Defense Casper W. Weinberger expressed his gratitude for capturing this smoking gun intact.

*The Middle Shoals Shootout.* Shortly following the capture of the *Iran Ajr*, Army special operation helicopters became involved in a second incident in the Persian Gulf. In early October 1987 intelligence revealed *Pasdaran* boats in and around Farsi Island. These boats were known to frequently tie themselves to navigation aids to avoid detection, protect themselves from rough seas, and organize ambushes against ships moving through international waters. On the night of 8 October a team of one MH-6 and two AH-6 helicopters conducted a sweep through this area.

As the helicopters approached the island they detected the small boats, Boston Whalers and Boghammers, near the Middle Shoals Buoy. The Iranians responded immediately, engaging the helicopters with small arms fire. The helicopters returned fire

and within minutes the action was over. All the *Pasdaran* boats were destroyed and only four crew members survived. The helicopters on the other hand received no effective fire.<sup>85</sup>

The employment of special operation aviation assets significantly contributed to the end of Iran's reign of terror in the Persian Gulf. Iran's strategy aimed at keeping the United States "off-balance and out of the fray in the Persian Gulf," and it conducted tactical covert minelaying operations to achieve this objective. TF 160's ability to operate at night and effectively identify and engage the enemy's small boats and minelaying activities eliminated Iran's tactical capability to support its strategy.<sup>86</sup> TF 160 also supported U.S. strategic objectives to maintain freedom of passage in international waters and credibility with the Gulf Arab states without escalating the Iran-Iraq War. The deployment of Army special operations helicopters on U.S. Navy ships is an excellent demonstration of how SOF can participate in the operational level of war, "the use of military forces to achieve strategic goals," by linking the tactical employment of forces to strategic objectives.<sup>87</sup>

#### Just Cause: Paitilla Airfield

Powell wondered if the SEAL teams were wired together properly and fully integrated with the rest of the plan.<sup>88</sup>

Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*

Naval special warfare forces involved in Just Cause were tasked organized under commander, Task Force White (TF White), the commander of NSWG-2 . TF White was composed of elements from NSWG-2, Special Boat Unit 26, NSWU-8, and SEAL Teams 2 and 4. TF White's forward operating base was established at NSWU-8, Rodman Naval Station, Panama City, Panama and supported the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) commander, Lieutenant General Carl Stiner. During the course of the operation, TF White

conducted several missions in support of the JSOTF, such as blocking access to Paitilla Airfield, disabling two fast patrol boats, denying the use of the Panama Canal, and securing Balboa pier and yacht club. TF White achieved all these objectives successfully, however, of all the missions conducted in support of Just Cause, it is the SEALs' Paitilla Airfield mission, and its inordinately high casualties, that raised the most controversy within the military.<sup>89</sup>

The mission, as planned, tasked forty-eight SEALs to block the runway at Paitilla Airfield and deny a possible escape route for General Manuel Antonio Noriega. Planners used SEALs to conduct the mission primarily because they could approach the target by water. The JSOTF considered other options but rejected them for various reasons. A Ranger or SEAL airborne insertion was rejected because it would have required a minimum deployment of six additional UH-60 Black Hawks via C-5A aircraft flying into what was already "an air traffic controllers nightmare" or dropping into a small airfield located in the middle of the city and surrounded by multi-level buildings. A Ranger water insertion was also eliminated because it required three times the number of combat rubber raiding craft and patrol boats to support the mission. Marines were also considered--their Amtrack vehicles could have provided cover for the troops and could have been used to block the runway--however, this option required an irregular deployment of an amphibious ship and planners feared it would increase the military's signature in the region. A SEAL land insertion option was also eliminated because JTF planners did not want to compromise operations with additional ground movements. As a result the JTF commander selected the SEAL water insertion option because it did not increase traffic in the already congested air space and prevented compromise of the operation.<sup>90</sup>

The unit that conducted the Paitilla Airfield mission was composed of a waterborne C3 (command, control, and communications) element, ground C3 element, and assault elements. The C3 element was located onboard a sixty-five-foot patrol boat support/escort platform with

the commander, SEAL Team 4's commanding officer, aboard. The ground C3 element was composed of a seven-man team, which included the ground force commander (the executive officer of SEAL Team 4), two air force combat command and control personnel, a SEAL officer for overseeing communications, two corpsman, and one enlisted SEAL for security. The final elements included two platoons of sixteen SEALs from SEAL Team 4.<sup>91</sup>

As the SEALs inserted toward the beach off Paitilla, Commander, Joint Task Force South (JTF-South) advanced H-hour by 15 minutes. The change in H-hour was due to an American unit, located in another part of the city, prematurely engaging an unknown Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) unit.<sup>92</sup> At approximately the same time the SEALs lost communications with their primary fire support platform, an AC-130 Spectre gunship.<sup>93</sup> Thus in a matter of moments two of the three elements that made SEALs operations in Vietnam so successful, surprise and firepower support, were lost. Intelligence, the third element, also failed the SEALs. Initial intelligence reports suggested that Paitilla Airfield would be manned by a few untrained security guards and little opposition should be expected at 0100 H-Hour. As a result the SEALs approached a target that heavily favored the defender, without any form of cover or concealment, and in a shooting gallery environment, where even the most wild shot could find a target as it skipped along the tarmac.<sup>94</sup>

As the platoon moved up the runway they encountered the already alerted civilian maintenance and security personnel and directed them to evacuate the airport. What started as a verbal confrontation quickly turned into a brawl and the SEALs were forced to subdue and bound those that refused to leave. The ground force commander then received transmissions that three armored personnel carriers were traveling in the direction of the airfield and that a helicopter had just taken off from Colon (if Noriega were coming to Panama City, the helicopter would have to land at Paitilla). The platoons adjusted their

formation to ready themselves for this additional threat. It was then that either a PDF soldier/security guard or SEAL opened fire. The SEALs returned a tremendous amount of fire, destroying the aircraft and setting the hanger afire. In the end the SEALs blocked and secured the runway for the next 37 hours.<sup>95</sup> However, the cost of success was high, with four dead and eight more wounded. The reported helicopter with General Noriega never arrived. The armored personnel carrier passed by Paitilla unnoticed.

#### Desert Storm

Special Operations Forces provide commanders capabilities that extend their vision of the battlefield, increase their flexibility, and enhance their initiative. These forces will be fully integrated into military operations by the combatant commanders.<sup>96</sup>

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy*

On 2 August 1990, the Iraqi military rolled into Kuwait and massed its forces along the Saudi Arabian border. All that stood between this force and the rich oil fields along the northeastern Saudi coastline was the Saudi military. It was apparent that Iraqi forces were in a position to seize the oil fields unless U.S. forces were quickly deployed. On 7 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the initial deployment order. United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) tasked its special operations component, Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) “to assume operational control of its component special operations forces (SOF) and conduct combat search and rescue operations.”<sup>97</sup> USCINCCENT’s “Employment of SOF Concept” further directed SOF to support the Saudi’s special reconnaissance efforts in the western areas. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf’s intent expected SOF to be his “eyes and ears.”<sup>98</sup>

On 10 August 1990, Colonel Jesse Johnson, SOCCENT's commander, his staff, and Naval Special Warfare Task Group (NSWTG) composed of personnel from Naval Special Warfare Group One (NSWG-1), platoons from West Coast SEAL Teams, and detachments from Special Boat Units deployed to Saudi Arabia. Colonel Johnson and his staff established their headquarters at King Fahd International Airport (KFIA) on 13 August and completed the move on 17 August. The NSWTG found a home at Half Moon Bay, a recreational beach on a sheltered bay. After setting up barbed wire perimeters, spotlights, roadblocks, and machinegun positions, NSWTG was ready to receive its second increment of personnel, and on 9 September, the total number of personnel assigned to the group numbered 224. The NSWTG was provided invaluable support by the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion (528th SOSB) based out of KFIA.<sup>99</sup>

*Combat Search and Rescue.* SOCCENT was not originally considered by USCENTCOM for deployment to Desert Shield. It was only after convincing USCENTCOM that SOF's nighttime clandestine insertion capabilities made them ideally suited for combat search and rescue (CSAR) did SOCCENT receive an invitation. CSAR is, by doctrine, a service responsibility. However, during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the responsibilities for CSAR were divided by area of operation (AO).

In order to coordinate the mission among SOCCENT, his various components, and the downed aircrew, Colonel Johnson established a Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) at KFIA. Information was consolidated at the RCC for decision on whether to execute a mission. Colonel Johnson established specific criteria for execution, such as reports of visible parachutes and voice transmissions and intelligence on the disposition of enemy forces in relation to the downed pilot. Once the mission was approved Commander, Air Force Special Operations Forces Central (AFSOCCENT) would determine the most suitable

aircraft and support requirements available. Additional coordination was facilitated by a liaison officer located in the tactical air command center (TACC) to maintain good relations with AFSOCCENT. Finally, in mid-November SOCCENT conducted a large scale exercise, CSAREX 91-04, to realistically test its CSAR capabilities, establish techniques and procedures between gunship and CAS aircraft, and test command and control procedures.

Naval special warfare had not expected the CSAR mission and had not conducted training or rehearsals prior to deploying. The NSWTG quickly drafted a CSAR plan in coordination with AFSOCCENT that detailed the use of its helicopters to cast SEAL swimmers to retrieve downed aircrews in the Persian Gulf. One difficulty planners encountered was clearly defining the NAVCENT (U.S. Naval Forces Central) and SOCCENT areas of responsibilities (AOR). SOCCENT and NSWTG eventually worked out coordination problems and defined the AORs in a plan that was tested in a series of exercises. The plan called for leaving the line between NAVCENT and SOCCENT purposely "vague with deliberate areas of overlap." This arrangement was agreed to "because the Navy preferred to rescue its own pilots whenever possible."<sup>100</sup>

When Desert Storm initiated on 17 January 1991 SOCCENT had a wide array of available assets and capabilities. "The mixture of aircraft caused some logistical problems, but also provided for versatility by allowing SOCCENT to tailor available assets to a particular operational need."<sup>101</sup> Aircraft available to SOCCENT included eight Army Blackhawks and four Chinooks; four Navy Seahawks and five H-3s; eight Air Force Pave Lows, eight Pave Hawks, and four HC-130 aerial tanker aircraft. Each aircraft had a different capability that could be applied to a specific situation. For example, the Navy HH-60B had special navigation systems and extra long-range fuel tanks. While the Air Force

MH-53J is capable of in-flight refueling and has miniguns forward and a rear-mounted .50-cal machine gun.<sup>102</sup>

During the air campaign SOCCENT conducted three successful CSAR missions. The first was the rescue of a Navy F-14 pilot about 130 miles inside Iraq and 60 miles northwest of Baghdad. This pilot was rescued by a pair of MH-53J Pave Lows closely coordinated by two A-10s that communicated between the downed pilot and the rescue team. During the execution of the mission, as enemy activity increased in the area, the A-10s rolled in and destroyed a rapidly approaching truck with short bursts of cannon fire. The helicopters then located the downed pilot and within 30 seconds the pickup was complete. The second successful CSAR mission was conducted by an SH-60B launched from the *Nicholas*. The pilot was quickly found six miles off the Kuwaiti coast. SEALs from the helicopter entered the water and attached a rescue harness to the pilot who was then hoisted aboard. The entire mission took less than thirty-five minutes. The final successful CSAR mission occurred when an F-16 pilot went down thirty-six miles outside of Kuwait. Two MH-60s quickly retrieved the pilot and returned him to KKMC. Most CSARs were not successful. Unsuccessful missions were normally the result of the team arriving after the crew had been already captured by Iraqi forces.<sup>103</sup>

“No one in the chain of command anticipated the relatively small number of Coalition aircraft actually lost in the war.” However, SOCCENT’s ability to plan, coordinate, and conduct these operations from various locations along the front and in the Persian Gulf played a significant role in their success. Also, as stated above, SOF’s flexibility and capabilities convinced USCENTCOM to deploy SOCCENT, thus allowing SOF to eventually play a larger role in the war.

*Coalition Warfare.* One of the larger roles SOF conducted prior to and during the war was coalition warfare training.<sup>104</sup> The need to conduct coalition warfare increased as the number and diversity of allied forces in the area increased. General Schwarzkopf was also quick to realize that the current and reliable information on the readiness of Arab and other units was extremely beneficial. “This information, called ‘ground truth,’ consisted primarily of three elements: exact location, commander’s intent, and unit capabilities.”<sup>105</sup>

NSWTG deployed elements along the border on 19 August 1990, to provide close air support training and coordination to the Saudis. The SEALs provided linkages to the Air Force and Navy air assets in theater and training in the techniques of combined arms warfare. When CENTCOM finally lifted the halt on SOF deployments to theater, this mission was quickly turned over to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) on 5 September. The NSWTG also deployed units to train the Saudis in naval special warfare capabilities. Many Saudis had attended Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training in Coronado, California, or had worked with the SEALs during operation Earnest Will. From this foundation, the SEALs developed basic combat swimmer and advanced operator training programs. The SEALs also trained Saudi high-speed boat operators and conventional Saudi naval forces in joint and combined operations. Within a few months “the Saudis were soon able to operate alongside their U.S. counterparts.”<sup>106</sup>

*Special Reconnaissance.* SOCCENT conducted twelve special reconnaissance missions during Desert Storm. “One of the missions was the overall designation for fifteen near-shore boat operations” conducted in support of USCENTCOM’s deception plan. Three other SR missions were early warning networks that SEALs and the 5th SFG (A) had established with Saudi and Kuwaiti forces and continuously manned during Desert Shield.

SEALs also deployed on almost every SH-3 helicopter sortie, including logistical and administrative flights, to be on standby for CSAR and conduct mine hunting operations.

The deception support operations were most likely the most dramatic and important operations conducted by the SEALs during Desert Shield/Storm. Between 29 January and 16 February 1991, elements of the NSWTCG, in coordination with Kuwaiti and Saudi naval forces, conducted a series of nearshore and offshore reconnaissance missions. These missions were in addition to special boat unit (SBU) patrols that had been maintained along the Saudi coast since August. The objectives of these operations were to “collect intelligence on Iraqi forces; reconnoiter beaches and shorelines; establish a naval presence in northern Gulf coastal waters; and, most important, deception.” The deception plan called for fixing Iraqi attention on potential amphibious landings by U.S. Marines.<sup>107</sup>

The plan culminated in a large-scale operation on the night of 23-24 February 1991, the same night as the ground offensive. Fifteen SEALs, supported by SBU high speed boats, simulated a hydrographic reconnaissance and beach clearance operation. SEALs were inserted via helicopter to a Kuwaiti island and further transferred to a waiting SBU detachment for insertion off the designated beach landing site. The small team of SEALs swam toward shore placing buoys to mark boat lanes and demolition charges with delay timers to simulate beach clearance operations. Following the recovery of all swimmers the boats “raked the Iraqi positions along the shoreline with automatic weapons before returning to base.”<sup>108</sup>

Naval special warfare also conducted several other missions. Examples include oil platform boardings conducted from the *Nicholas* and direct action operations conducted in coordination with Kuwaiti Marines to seize Qaruh, Maradim, and Kubbar Islands--the first reclamation of Kuwaiti territory by Kuwaiti forces. At sea SEALs operating in support of

NAVCENT were prepared to conduct hydrographic reconnaissance and beach clearance operations if required and conducted several visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) taskings in support of maritime interdiction operations (MIO).<sup>109</sup>

#### Into the Present

...already there or first to deploy.<sup>110</sup>

#### United States Special Operations Command *Vision Statement 2020*

Naval special warfare continues to support both the fleet commander and the special operations commander in theater with deployed naval special warfare assets. Recent operations include hydrographic reconnaissance of the Sava River in support of the implementation force (IFOR) crossing from Croatia into war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina; Operations Provide Promise and Deny Flight from 1993 to 1995; noncombatant extraction operations (NEOs) in Liberia, the latest operation Assured Response in April of 1996; the search and recovery for victims of Commerce secretary Ronald Brown's aircraft near Dubrovnik in early April of 1996; Operations Restore Hope, UNOSOM Two, and United Shield making significant contributions (Specifically the SEALs supported or provided support to reconnaissance and surveillance operations, VBSS operations, protection to American forces, anti-smuggling operations; and riverine patrols; SEALs also ensured the safe landing of the Marines and the arrival of merchant ships containing the food required to alleviate the starvation prevalent in Somalia.); Operation Restore Democracy/Maintain Democracy where SOF's Patrol Coastal (PC) class ships joined the fleet in enforcing United Nations' trade sanctions; interagency support, primarily with PCs, to Coast Guard drug enforcement operations; numerous FID operations, specifically in South America; and joint

and/or combined exercises (JCETS) throughout the world in support of theater commanders' peacetime engagement strategies.

Since the passing of the Cohen-Nunn Amendment most naval special warfare operations have conducted these operations in support of one of two primary commanders; the theater special operations commander or the fleet commander. The following two examples demonstrate how the current command structure functions.

*Special Operations Command Europe: Assured Response.* When Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown's plane crashed in April of 1996, Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR) "was tasked to employ its unique resources" in support of the search and rescue operation. Brigadier General Mike Canavan, Commander SOCEUR, arrived on scene with special operations helicopters and a joint force of Army special forces, SEALs, and Air Force special tactics personnel and assumed "total responsibility for the mission, organizing British, French, German, Spanish, Croat, and U.S. forces in the grim task of recovering the 35 victims of the crash."<sup>111</sup>

Following the recovery, while still in the air returning to Stuttgart, Germany, General Canavan and SOCEUR were tasked with a second mission, a non-combatant extraction operation (NEO) in Liberia. Monrovia was in chaos and diplomats, relief workers, and United Nations observers needed to be extracted. SOCEUR, acting as the joint force (JTF) commander, identified three key tasks: "to establish a staging base in Sierra Leone for transporting the evacuees to a safe haven in Senegal, secure the U.S. embassy, and evacuate U.S. and third country nationals." Again a force was quickly assembled composed of the 352nd Special Operations Group fixed and rotary winged aircraft and TF 160 MH-47Ds, Army special forces, Air Force special tactics teams, and Naval special warfare personnel from NSWU-2 in Stuttgart, Germany and located at the staging base in Sierra

Leone. Most of the SOCEUR staff and units involved had worked together before which greatly assisted in the operation. As General Shelton, commander USSOCOM explained:

The integration of joint SOF became apparent as personnel arrived at the airfield and were greeted by friends and acquaintances of long standing. Most SOCEUR staff members had served previous assignments with the operational units arriving in Sierra Leone, and virtually all the units involved had worked together. In the regionally oriented special operations community there are few strangers.<sup>112</sup>

Once the initial crisis was over, and SOF capabilities no longer required, the SOCEUR commander transferred responsibilities to a conventional commander.

Operation Assured Response demonstrated how the theater SOC command and control structure and capabilities can support a rapid deployment and ensure “cohesion and optimal use of limited resources.”

*Vision 2000 and Task Group Sixth Fleet.* Vision 2000, as discussed in Chapters one and two, is the result of how naval special warfare plans to support its customers, the warfighting commanders, with the best possible naval special warfare package. The study that resulted in Vision 2000 concluded that deploying units were not fully integrated and interoperable; and the community had systemic problems, such as routinely exceeding the CNO’s personnel tempo guidelines and an inability to get personnel to schools (most important language schools). It also looked at the way it was organized for deployment and war and found that the two were not congruous in that each deploying unit trained independently and had little interoperability with sister naval special operations and other special operations forces. The study also concluded that no senior level naval special warfare officer existed for the planing and employment of forces overseas and that commanding officers only deployed for contingencies and then only with ad hoc organization.<sup>113</sup>

Vision 2000 cuts across many functional areas of naval special warfare, such as logistics, training, personnel tempo, and the reorganization of SEAL teams and special boats units. The purpose of this study is to focus on one issue of Vision 2000, the command and control of forward deployed naval special warfare forces; and the most significant change that Vision 2000 makes in this area is the deployment of its senior officers and their relationship with SOC and fleet commanders.

The concept calls for a senior naval captain (O-6) to take command of a naval special warfare task force (NSWTF), what is currently the in-theater naval special warfare unit. Instead of receiving platoons every six months, as they currently do now, the NSWTF would have SEAL platoons permanently assigned. The reasoning behind this concept is to reduce the number of platoons required to maintain a three to one deployment ratio and allow for regional expertise, specifically language and cultural expertise. On the fleet side a SEAL Team commanding officer, a naval commander, would deploy with a NSWTF that has conducted predeployment training as a single group, not as separate platoons supporting the various fleet battle groups and independent SDV capable submarines. The theory is that this staff can provide an integrated and interoperable package that can best support the fleet commander. The final modification to the command and control structure is to provide an interface, a mechanism for coordination, between the SOC and their naval special warfare assets (purple SEALs) and the fleet their naval special warfare assets (blue SEALs). This is accomplished by giving the NSWTF commander the additional duty (ADDU) responsibility to liaison with the fleet for mutual support. At the time of this study, three naval special warfare task groups have deployed in support of Commander, Sixth Fleet. The following mission is an example of how the concept can be employed.

*Resupply of the American Embassy in Algeria.* One of the first independent operations conducted by naval special warfare task group, Sixth Fleet (NSWTG-SIXTHFLT) was to support the USNS *Saturn* resupply of the U.S. embassy in Algiers by providing “low key but visible deterrent to terrorist action.” The threat was primarily from armed Islamic groups.

Commander, Sixth Fleet designated commander, NSWTG-SIXTHFLT as the on-scene commander (OSE) and gave him OPCON of all three fleet naval special warfare task units, the USNS *Saturn*, and an EP-3 maritime patrol aircraft to support the mission. The commander, NSWTG-SIXTHFLT initiated the planning process by establishing the missions end state as “conduct the resupply without incident and if an incident occurs to respond with appropriate force to save American lives and property.” His staff developed enemy courses of action and produced key indications and warnings of threats for dealing with the ambiguities of the environment. (For example, how a contact responded to the *Saturn* when it changed course to give up its right of way--closing bearing decreasing range equaled a threat--or the number of personnel onboard a small craft--more personnel equaled a lesser suicide bomber threat.) A detailed response matrix was developed based on rules of engagement to ensure a measured and sufficient response. And finally, liaison personnel were placed in key positions such as a SEAL in the EP-3 and the embassies regional security officer onboard the ship.

The task group achieved its desired end state--no hostile actions. The key to the operations was having a senior naval special warfare officer, a post major command, naval captain, as the officer-in-charge. The supporting assets worked for him, thus allowing for both unity of command and effort.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chief of Naval Operations to Bureau of Ordnance, Memo: OP-30M32-SP, ser. 0821130, Subject: "Underwater Obstacle Removal--Research Unit for." SecNav/CNO file. Secret, S76-1--S77-1, 1943. Box 712. Folder S76-2/AK--S76-2/NB, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

<sup>2</sup>Dale Andradé et al., *A History of Naval Special Warfare: World War II to Panama* Parts I and II (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress July 1992), 92-93; and Commander Amphibious Training Command, U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Captain Clarence Gulbranson, Commanding Officer, Amphibious Training Base, Ft. Pierce, Florida. Subject: "Joint Army and Navy Experimental and Testing Board for Demolition or Removal of Beach Obstacles--establishment of." 2 November 1943. SecNav/CNO file, Secret, S76-1 -- S77-1, 1943. Box 712, folder S76-2/AK -- S76-2/2/NB. National Archives and Records Administration. General George H. Marshall (sic?) in a memorandum for Admiral King mentioned as early as 9 September 1943 the requirement for training in the removal of underwater and beach obstacles.

<sup>3</sup>Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 56-57 and 63-65.

<sup>4</sup>Andradé, 65.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 88-92. The original emphasis was toward the European Theater and the inevitable invasion of France. A deadline of 14 February 1944 was set for delivery of JANET's recommendations. One of the results of this board was the Stingray. Stingrays were small remotely controlled boats filled with demolition. This program ran into a great amount of difficulty. The boats had a tendency to fail or run amuck during operations and created significant hazardous to navigation during landings.

<sup>7</sup>Patrick L. McKiernan, "Tarawa: The Tide that Failed," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (February 1962): 40.

<sup>8</sup>Andradé, 131-134.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>11</sup>Francis Douglas Fane and Don Moore, *The Naked Warriors* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1956), 45.

<sup>12</sup>Andradé, 126.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 119-127.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 128-131.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 131-134.

<sup>16</sup>Fane, 25.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>18</sup>Andradé, 103. Andradé believes that it was “Turner’s conclusions about UDTs in operation Flintlock which marked the true beginning of the modern UDT concept, not Draper Kauffman’s work with NCDUs as Ft. Pierce. Kauffman [according to Andradé] merely followed Admiral Turner’s lead.”

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 146-152.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>21</sup>Fane, 159.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 160.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War Two: Victory in the Pacific*, Vol. 14 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 25.

<sup>25</sup>Fane, 172.

<sup>26</sup>Andradé, 153; and Fane, 171.

<sup>27</sup>Fane, 174.

<sup>28</sup>Isely, 469.

<sup>29</sup>Fane, 179. The gunboats received a dispatch from Admiral Blandy stating “Greatly admire magnificent courage your valiant personnel.” The gunboats were awarded the rare Presidential Unit Citation. Radio Tokyo reported that a major landing force was repulsed with heavy losses and that a battleship was hit and sunk instantaneously.

<sup>30</sup>Fane, 179; and Isely 469, 478. None of the swimmers had been able to get above the waterline and all the soil samples were taken from shallow waters where the sea had ground and packed the volcanic sand. The decision to declare that the soil suitable for all types of vehicles proved to be wrong and only with difficulty could a Marine on foot or an amphibian tractor move forward, while wheeled vehicles such as jeeps completely bogged down.

<sup>31</sup>Fane, 181.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>33</sup>Commander Naval Forces Far East, "USPACFLTOPS Korean War Interim Evaluation Report" Vol. 2 (25 June to 15 November 1950, microfiche), 81.

<sup>34</sup>Examples include the destruction by naval combat demolition units of a large cable and boom across the Wadi Sebou river in support of Allied landing during operation Torch; Allied forces and Axis forces had conducted several successful combat swimmer operations, the most significant was the Italian attack on the British fleet at Alexandria on 19 December 1941; and unconventional warfare operations conducted by Naval Group China.

<sup>35</sup>Andradé, 169.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 169-173.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>40</sup>Fane, 244.

<sup>41</sup>James A. Field Jr., *History of United States Naval Operations: Korea* (Washington: 1962), 308.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 412.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 229-242.

<sup>45</sup>Field, 303-305; and Fane, 358-359.

<sup>46</sup>Field, 356-7.

<sup>47</sup>Field, 202; and Andradé, 197-207.

<sup>48</sup>Andradé, 207. In total, the Korean theater had four major organizations involved in unconventional warfare, with a total of fourteen sub-units operating under them. Salamander fell under the operational control of Far East Command Liaison Detachment (FEC/LD), which included other units such as Aviary, airborne operations. Other units not in the FEC/LD organization included Special activities Unit 1 (SAU) and Task Force Kirkland.

<sup>49</sup>Andradé, 206; and Field 422-23.

<sup>50</sup>Andradé, 197-209.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 210.

<sup>52</sup>Commander Naval Forces Far East, "USPACFLTOPS Korean War Interim Evaluation Report" Vol. 2 (25 June to 15 November 1950, microfiche), 81.

<sup>53</sup>Fane, 239.

<sup>54</sup>Andradé, 182-187 and 190-1; and Fane, 238-243; and Field, 146-147. All information concerning SOG was drawn from these three sources. Additional documentation concerning this intriguing unit was not discovered during this study.

<sup>55</sup>Bill Fawcett, Bill, ed., *Hunters and Shooters: An Oral History of the U.S. Navy SEALs in Vietnam* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1995), 17-18.

<sup>56</sup>Edward J. Marolda and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1986), 88.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 120-122.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 122-129.

<sup>62</sup>Marolda, 122-129; and Bill Fawcett, 3. SEAL Team 1 was commissioned at Coronado, California on 8 January 1962, at 1300 hours. SEAL Team 2 was commissioned approximately the same time at Little Creek, Virginia. The commissioning orders were backdated to 1 January 1962.

<sup>63</sup>Marolda, 393 to 462.

<sup>64</sup>Bosilevac, T. L., *SEALs* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990), 39.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>66</sup>Captain Bruce P. Dyer, United States Navy, Retired, interview by author, 17 March 1997, Fort Leavenworth, notes, author's personnel collection. Captain Dyer, who served as a platoon commander in Vietnam and a task unit commander during Operation Earnest Will, provided several interesting comments on the command and control of SEALs in Vietnam, Earnest Will, and for the future.

<sup>67</sup>Joel M. Hutchins, *Swimmers Among the Trees: SEAL Operations in the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996), ix.

<sup>68</sup>Cutler, Thomas J. *Brown Water, Black Berets: Coastal and Riverine Warfare in*

*Vietnam* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute 1988), 72.

<sup>69</sup>Naval Operations Support Groups were the forerunners to today's Naval Special Warfare Groups.

<sup>70</sup>Andradé, 69-88; and Bosilevac, 232; and William L. Hamilton III., "Reflections on a True Warrior's legacy to Naval Special Warfare," *Full Mission Profile* (Spring 1993), 61-63. Captain Bucklew, a former professional football player, was one of the original Scouts and Raiders trained to support the amphibious landings in North Africa and Europe. Considered by many as the father of the SEAL teams, his exploits during World War Two are legendary. Prior to Operation Torch his ship was sunk by a German torpedo, however, in July 1943, he earned the Navy Cross for inserting from a submarine and using kayaks to conduct operations in support of amphibious operations in preparation of for landing into Sicily and Italy. Six months prior to the Normandy Invasion he collected beach samples for military planners and on D day he returned and earned his second Navy Cross. Later during the war in the Pacific he conducted an extremely long reconnaissance of Japanese forces on the Chinese mainland.

<sup>71</sup>Marolda, 303-305.

<sup>72</sup>Hamilton, 63.

<sup>73</sup>Hutchins, 7-8.

<sup>74</sup>PRU: Provincial Reconnaissance Units. The action arm of the Phoenix Program. The units consisted of indigenous personnel and operated only in and around the provinces where the personnel typically resided. Armed and paid by the CIA through the Phoenix program, the PRUs were military action groups led by an American military advisor. The PRUs were able to supply good intelligence, some of the best of the war, to the SEALs. The SEALs provided top level training, access to support, and most importantly leadership and direction. SEAL duty with the PRUs was independent and mostly conducted by relatively junior but aggressive enlisted personnel. Eventually small numbers of the PRUs (not the advisors) started to work independently and rumors that the Phoenix Program was assassinating innocent civilians, combined with the My Lai incident, raised questions about the SEALs' legal status while operating against the Viet Cong infrastructure. Congressional inquiries held in the early 1970s did not turn up any hard evidence. However, by June 1971 SEALs had ceased most operations on their own initiative due to the restrictive rules of engagement.

<sup>75</sup>United States Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020*.

<sup>76</sup>Peter Clemens, "Army Helicopters, Navy Ships, and Operation 'Earnest Will'--the Gulf, 1987," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 6., No. 2 (London: Frank Cass, Autumn 1995), 209. The majority of the information used in this section comes from this paper.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>78</sup>A dhow is a lateen rigged Arabian craft.

<sup>79</sup>Clemens, 210.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 218.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 217-219.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>87</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 February 1995), II-2.

<sup>88</sup>Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Pocket Star Books, 1991), 150.

<sup>89</sup>Edward G. Winters and Kent A. Paro, "The Misuse of Special Operations Forces" (Thesis, Master of Arts in National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, 1994), 50-53. This study used interviews of naval special warfare personnel involved in the Paitilla Airfield mission, specifically the ground force commander and one of the platoon commanders.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 50-53.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 61-63.

<sup>92</sup>Malcolm McConnell, *Just Cause: The Real Story of America's High-Tech Invasion of Panama* (New York: St. Martin's Press, November 1991), 33-34; and Winters and Paro, 41. At 0026 the morning of the assault, an element from of TF Bayonet (Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry of the 193d Infantry Brigade) open fired on an unknown Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) unit traveling down the Gaitan Highway towards Panama.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>94</sup>Winters and Paro, 64; and McConnell, 65.

<sup>95</sup>Winters and Paro, 61-66.

<sup>96</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 15.

<sup>97</sup>United States Special Operations Command, "Desert Shield/Storm" (Draft), photo copy received from USSOCOM historian, 1.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 9-11.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 11-16.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 17. The terms coalition warfare and foreign internal defense (FID), which is a doctrinal mission, were used interchangeably. FID is not the correct term, since the threat was external, however the skills involved in both are similar.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>109</sup>USSOCOM, "Desert Shield/Storm," 40-41; and Captain Pete Toennies, Chief of Staff, Naval Special Warfare Command, interview with author, 7 March 1997, notes, author's collection. Hereafter noted as the Toennies, interview.

<sup>110</sup>United States Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020*, 4.

<sup>111</sup>Henry Shelton, "Coming of Age: Theater Special Operations Commands," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 14 (Winter 1996-7): 50.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>113</sup>Naval Special Warfare Vision 2000, Command brief: 4.

<sup>114</sup>Toennies, interview; and Captain Pete Toennies, United States Navy, Chief of Staff, Naval Special Warfare Command. "Resupply of AMEMBASSY Algeria, [1996]," (facsimile). Author's collection. Most of the detailed information on Vision 2000 was received during the interview, resupply mission brief, and naval special warfare command brief.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS

SOF are most effectively employed when centralized decision making gives way to decentralized planning and execution. Joint operational planning should be accomplished on a face-to-face basis. The SOF hallmark: those who will execute the mission must plan it.<sup>1</sup>

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication  
3-05.3, *Joint Special Operations Operational  
Procedures*

The roles and missions of naval special warfare have derived from a combination of three various but interconnected sources. These areas can be found first, among the fault-lines of interservice, interagency, or even international responsibilities; second, attempts to get the doctrine “right”; and finally, the influence of senior level military and government officials. Each one of these sources has in the past produced or modified the roles and missions of naval special warfare.

This chapter looks at how the three sources of naval special warfare’s roles and missions have affected naval special warfare’s command and control. The chapter examines each command and control structure against joint doctrine's guidance for the command and control of special operations forces and produces a set of general principles regarding their operational command and control. The study then compares these principles to current and future roles of naval special warfare to determine how forward deployed naval special warfare forces should posture themselves to meet these new challenges.

## World War II: Scouts and Raiders to UDTs

*Origins of roles and missions.* One of the hallmarks for successful amphibious operations during World War II was the detailed division of command responsibilities. The doctrine for amphibious operations specifically detailed how and when the transfer of command from the commander, amphibious task force (CATF) to the commander, landing forces (CLF), occurred. Amphibious doctrine also delineated the division of responsibility for the various other tasks conducted during an amphibious operation, such as control of aircraft, logistics, and fire support.<sup>2</sup> It was in one of these areas of responsibility that UDT's roles and missions developed. This area was both figuratively and literally found along the line of responsibility, from the nearshore to the high waterline, for the planning and execution in the CATF's and the CLF's, AORs.

The second source for the development of a hydrographic reconnaissance and beach clearance missions is found in the military's attempt, as Michael Howard said, "to get [the doctrine] right quickly when the moment arrives."<sup>3</sup> Most World War II era military planners assumed that because of the famous failed amphibious operation at Gallipoli during World War I any attempt to land on a well defended shore would be sheer suicide. The military, except for the possible exception of the Marine Corps, did not completely support the amphibious training conducted between World War I and II. As the threat of war approached, military planners realized that defeating the Axis powers required a landing in Europe. The Army and Navy prepared for these landings by conducting more realistic and focused exercises--training that eventually identified the requirements for amphibious reconnaissance.

As the war developed, situations in the Atlantic, and more importantly the Pacific, further convinced senior level officers of the requirement for a robust and continuous hydrographic reconnaissance capability. In response they established UDTs on a permanent

basis. Senior level officers' initiative and creativity are the third source. It was General Marshall, Admiral King, and Admiral Turner who created and significantly influenced the formation of the various units that conducted hydrographic reconnaissance and beach clearance operations.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* The chain of command for NCDUs and UDTs developed over the course of the war as the techniques, experience, and size of these units increased. Without a central controlling commander, planners scattered the six-man NCDU teams and UDTs among the various assaulting elements. The division of UDTs into small supporting elements assigned to various commanders created confusion in both the planning and conduct of operations. This confusion was demonstrated at Saipan and Leyte where planners used too many swimmers on beaches that did not require hydrographic surveys or demolition operations. Dividing UDTs into numerous small units also made it difficult to provide fire support and resulted in inefficient or in some cases no allocation of assets.

Admiral Turner created ComUDT to organize the growing number of units and provide a location for centralized planning and coordination. The creation of a single operational commander for UDT eliminated the numerous and frequent changes in operational command that were common before the establishment of ComUDT. It also provided a senior officer for oversight responsibility who provided the link between the tactical employment of UDT and the operational requirements of the amphibious commander.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* Scouts and Raiders, JANET, NCDUs, and UDT all initiated their training in Fort Pierce, Florida. Collocation provided for an initial exchange of training philosophies, tactics, techniques, and procedures, which went a long way toward creation of standard operating procedures. Because UDT operations were new, the primary problem planners came across was identifying effective and efficient methods for

employment and requirements for support. The establishment of ComUDT combined the specific tactics and techniques used by the UDT with a senior officer's direct knowledge of the ever evolving and improving amphibious doctrine. It also provided the fleet with a sounding board for UDT capabilities and limitations. It was after Admiral Turner combined an amphibious planner with UDT planners that the Navy realized the full effectiveness of UDT.

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* Lieutenant Commander Kauffman still planned and controlled the units in the conduct of the operation; however, at Iwo Jima it was Captain Hanlon, ComUDT, who linked the tactical objectives of the units with the operational objectives of Admiral Blandy, the amphibious support force commander. ComUDT provided this link by ensuring that assigned units had the required training, rehearsals, fire support, and dissemination procedures and assets; and if the situation changed, as it did, the ability to adjust and coordinate support requirements for completion of the mission.

#### Korea: Mines, Raiders, and Guerrillas

*Origins of roles and missions.* Again, three factors influenced the development of UDT's roles and missions. The first source was a result of the Navy not maintaining its mine warfare capabilities. The Navy's mine warfare strategy suffered as a result of budget cuts and a conscious decision not to maintain a strong and viable MCM force. Events in Korea revealed the weakness in this strategy and the Navy, using a combination of aircraft, helicopters, UDT, and minesweepers quickly created a MCM capability that could reestablish control of the amphibious operations area (AOA). Confusion across lines of responsibility produced a second source of roles and missions, in this case, the line of responsibility between the Navy and the newly established CIA. The CIA required the support of the Navy and its UDTs to conduct a portion of its operations and the Navy, as it eventually realized, benefited from intelligence received during

these operations. The problem was that no doctrine or procedures existed for command and control of this interagency activity. Finally, the creativity of several senior leaders who saw an exploitable situation, Korea's vulnerable lines of communications, precipitated the establishment of SOG. SOG brought together the capabilities of two units--UDT's with its reconnaissance and demolition expertise, and the Marines' with their across-the-beach and landwarfare capabilities--to form a unit that was capable of conducting non-doctrinal operations not envisioned during the inter-war years.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* Most UDT operations conducted during the Korean War remained under the operational control of the amphibious advance force commander. UDT conducted the majority of these operations from one of three ship, the *Diachenko* or the *Bass*, for most conventional operations, and the *Begor*, for support of several unconventional operations. The Navy did allow UDTs to conduct operations in direct support of the CIA, however, as discussed in the case studies, COMNAVFE specifically limited the scope of their involvement.

*Avoid frequent changes in operational change of command.* The results of this study did not reveal indications of any changes in the operational command of UDTs, with the possible exception of support to CIA operations.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* All indications in the research gave evidence that naval staff officers were sufficiently familiar with the capabilities and requirements of UDT operations. Also, the ships' crews contributed to operations with significant expertise in fire support, small boat support, intelligence support, and C3 (command, control, and communications) support. The initial confusion over covert operations was the result of the numerous activities and supporting commands. Theater commander's eventually eliminated the confusion by placing all covert operations under a single commander, the

CCRAK. The Navy increased its participation in covert activities when it realized that it could benefit from the intelligence collected and, to increase the timeliness and pertinence of the information, eventually placed liaison officers within the various covert operations' command structures.

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* UDT commanding officers deployed with the teams and planned and coordinated most operations. Research found only two occasions during the Korean War when UDT personnel employed were not completely involved with the planning of the operation. The first occasion was during the initial UDT raid ashore conducted before the establishment of SOG. The UDT personnel objected to conducting the operation under the light of a full moon, but senior staffs apparently believed the mission could not be delayed any longer. The unsuccessful result of the mission, where North Korean troops arrived as if on cue, may or may not be attributed to UDT personnel being detected during insertion. The second incident involved the insertion of 235 ROK guerrillas and seven tons of equipment. After-action reports from the *Begor* criticized the operational planners for not providing an interpreter and exceeding the capabilities of the *Begor*, which was only capable of supporting 144 troops, including UDT personnel. The amphibious force commander, Admiral George C. Dyer, rejected the *Begor*'s criticism citing that there was ample time for *Begor* to obtain an interpreter, and that the remarks in the after-action report should be considered lessons learned rather than adverse comments on planning as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

#### Vietnam: Counterinsurgency and Riverine Warfare

*Origins of roles and missions.* The Vietnam era saw the largest and most diverse use of special operations since World War II. Much of this growth is attributable to President Kennedy. It was because of heavy pressure from the Kennedy administration that the services, including

the Navy, established units to conduct counterinsurgency. High level intervention was required to support the development of SEALs, and other units like them, because the missions they represented were the nontraditional, uncomfortable missions that conventional forces many times do not envision conducting or are, for justifiable reasons, unwilling to fund and develop.

The second factor that developed both SEALs and special boat units was the Navy's attempts to get its doctrine "right" when the political pressure to engage counterinsurgency threats increased. Finally, the confusion found along the fault-lines of interagency and interservice responsibilities created several roles for naval special warfare. One example, the development of a riverine capability, required the Navy to design a force that could operate in a brown water environment within the Army's traditional AOR. SEAL participation in MACV SOG operations and the CIA's Phoenix Program are additional examples of support across traditional lines of responsibility.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* Administratively, the chain of command for naval special warfare went back to Naval Operations Support Groups, Pacific and Atlantic. Within theater the command structure was very loose. Most SEAL platoons were assigned to one of the designated detachments, such as detachment alfa or golf, which were in turn under the operational control of COMNAVFORV supporting MACV operations. Once in country the platoons would operate in various areas throughout South Vietnam under the tactical control of a local commander, for example supporting Task Force 116 operations or directly in support of MACV SOG. The platoon commander could locally task supporting assets, such as the HAL-3 (helicopter attack light, Seawolfs) and VA-4 (fixed wing OV-10 Black Ponies) if required. However, much of the success in planning and conducting of these operations depended on the personalities and professional working relationships developed at the platoon level.<sup>5</sup> By late 1967 the SEALs primarily supported SOG operations, specifically OP31. It is interesting and

revealing to note that nowhere in the research could a wire diagram of SEAL units and their detachment's relationship with the overall command structure be found.

*Avoid frequent changes in operational change of command.* SEAL platoons consistently moved from one location to the next, changing tactical control along the way, with the overall operational commander normally remaining with COMNAVFORV. The research was not able to produce enough data to conclude if and how frequently these changes in operational control occurred. SEAL platoons conducted predeployment training in the states under the command of SEAL Teams 1 or 2. Before deploying to theater, platoons trained with various other units in northern California in preparation for riverine operations. However, there was no single coordination plan or concept of integration for forces during this training for later employment in Vietnam.<sup>6</sup> Each of the units, SEALs, helicopters, explosive ordnance disposal personnel, and special boat detachments arrived into theater and scattered throughout the Delta in support of various local commanders.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* Naval staff planners never achieved optimum potential from their SEALs. Commander T. L. Bosilivac, the author of *SEALs: UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam* concluded in his study that

although they were highly successful in their own districts and provinces throughout the Delta, their full potential was never really full understood or tapped. Most of their operations, especially early in the war, were nothing more than small-unit infantry tactics in a swamp environment. During the early years of the war and into early 1967, they were not only unknown in most military arenas, but they were seldom understood. They were posted throughout the Ca Mau peninsula and only gained attention as a product of their operational results. The early squads generally sat in all-night riverine ambushes or blindly stalked the swamps in hopes of running into a large enemy force. Their daring and aggressiveness gained more attention from most conventional planners than their true skills and capabilities.<sup>7</sup>

The success of the SEAL operations depended primarily on intelligence. Most of this intelligence did not come from senior staffs but was self-generated at the platoon level. By the

middle of 1967, the SEALs had developed their own intricate intelligence network. This network was cultivated and passed on to each successive platoon that arrived for its six month deployment. The lack of a more sophisticated system could be attributable to naval special warfare's fragmented command structure, or the theater's overall command structure, which could not support a mechanism for the development and dissemination of intelligence, or it could have been that it was "just hard." Only rarely did non-platoon-generated intelligence, such as photography, radio intercepts, or human intelligence get to the platoon level. As a result, many SEAL missions were usually "hit or miss" operations and primarily self-generated.<sup>8</sup>

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* Research determined that the operational and tactical employment of SEALs was decentralized at the platoon level and that the philosophy of SEAL command and control during Vietnam could be described as decentralized planning and decentralized execution. This lack of centralized decision making did not affect most SEAL missions and, in many ways, was the hallmark of their success. However, it did have weaknesses. These weaknesses became evident during several of the infrequent missions that required SEAL platoons to work in coordination with larger, more conventional forces. During these rare occasions, when they did participate in traditional cordon-and-search operations, they found themselves to be not well suited for the role.

Most research revealed that the platoon commander normally decided the objective for a particular mission, who would support the mission, how it would be executed and, most important, when and if it would be conducted. One SEAL veteran described the planning process as: "When they give us a mission, nobody tells us how to do it, we just go out and get it done."<sup>9</sup> This extraordinary flexibility was a product of the type of war being fought. Vietnam was a war without a time schedule or a front-line to measure success. The ability for the platoon commander to choose the time, place, and method of engaging the enemy gave the SEALs an

advantage that made their missions extremely successful at the tactical level but created a situation that increased the possibility for missions not be linked to an operational or strategic objective. It also made it difficult to operate in coordination with other units during larger missions.

### Earnest Will: Joint Task Force

*Origins of roles and missions.* The *Bridgeton* mining incident severely jeopardized the credibility of Operation Earnest Will and the 600-ship Navy, the later becoming an immediate focal point for the public. Many questioned the Navy's unbalanced force and ask why was so much money been invested in the large capital ships and submarines and so little in smaller and more versatile vessels. The answer was that this scenario did not fit into the traditional blue water naval engagement the Navy envisioned conducting during the Cold War. To engage the Cold War threat the Navy had to invest heavily in aircraft carriers, Aegis class cruisers, and long range submarines; and depend on the strength of its Allies in areas such as mine countermeasures and coastal patrols boats. However, Operation Earnest Will was a low intensity conflict conducted in the relatively shallow and restricted waters of the Persian Gulf. This political and physical environment required planners to organize a force that could carry out assigned missions in such a way so as to avoid any situation that would draw the United States into the Iran-Iraq War. This mission required assets that could operate in a low intensity area of conflict, identifying covert minelaying vessels from the hundreds of small boats moving through the Persian Gulf every night, and when necessary, quickly attack with an overwhelming force. These capabilities were not inherent in fleet assets or training.

Admiral Crowe, identifying both the deficiencies in the Navy and the requirements of the operation, turned to the Army for assets to support the mission. The Army provided its

special operations aviation regiment, TF 160, to fill the gap in the Navy's doctrine. Again the three sources of special operations roles and missions appear: first, the mission was not envisioned by military planners (low-intensity conflict); second, it originated along fault-lines in responsibilities (MCM); and third, it was influenced by senior level initiatives (Admiral Crowe).

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* The chain of command was very clear. Task Force 160 deployed into theater and came under the operational command of Rear Admiral Bernsen, Commander, Joint Task Force Middle East (CJTTFME) and, initially, the tactical command of the *Jarrett*.

*Avoid frequent changes in operational command.* Task force 160 remained under the operational control of CJTTFME.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* Research did not produce any unclassified data on the staff experience and expertise; however, readings did reveal that CJTTFME, onboard the *LaSalle*, was able to provide intelligence on the possibility of minelaying activities by the *Iran Ajr*. Also the *LaSalle*, *Jarrett*, LAMPS, and any other U.S. naval assets in the area provided LINK 11 data, the Navy's command and control network that provides a common picture of the battlespace, that TF 160 used for planning and *La Salle* and *Jarrett* used for operational and tactical control.<sup>10</sup>

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* Research indicated that TF 160 personnel did their own tactical planning for the capture of the *Iran Ajr* and Middle Shoals shoot-out.

#### Just Cause: Joint Special Operations Task Force

*Origins of roles and missions.* The decision to use SEALs to seize Paitilla Airport has been criticized by military scholars and critics and led to a great deal of dispute within the

special operations community.<sup>11</sup> As the case study detailed, planners selected the use of SEALs because they possessed perceived capabilities that either were not available or inherent in other forces, specifically an across-the-beach capability. However, this study found no example of a UDT or SEAL operation that required utilizing a force of this size. The only exception would be the UDT hydrographic missions of World War II. World War II hydrographic surveys depended mostly on fire support and very little on surprise and, with the exception of the ability to be extremely competent and comfortable in the water, the missions did not depend on the same criteria for success that most direct action special operations require.

To understand the Paitilla Airport mission requires an examination of the complete characteristics of the Just Cause operation. The SEALs' mission was a small but important part of the overall operation, which was, in many ways, a special operation in and of itself. The special operations characteristics of Just Cause required an extreme level of surprise, security, speed, and simplicity to succeed. General Stiner changed H-Hour when U.S. intelligence picked-up reports of what he interpreted to be a potential mission compromise. The problem was that the SEALs could not adjust to this change. Losing the element of surprise, they were forced to execute a mission that was compromised before they had reached the target.<sup>12</sup> The situation was made worse with the loss of communications with the primary fire support platform, the AC-130 Spectre gunship, and inaccurate intelligence. The loss of surprise and fire support, combined with poor intelligence denied the SEALs of their "relative advantage," a requirement for all direct action special operations; and it was only because of their determination and sense of purpose that they regained it to complete the mission. In Vietnam if the SEALs at any time lost their relative advantage they retired to return at a more advantageous time or called for additional support. However, because the Paitilla mission was a small part of a much larger

whole, the SEALs had to continue with the execution of their mission to support the success of the larger operation.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* The chain of command was very clear for the execution of the mission.

*Avoid frequent changes in operational command.* NSWG-2 deployed as TF White. The element that supported TF White on the Paitilla Airport mission was composed of members of SEAL Team 4 and their commanding officer. This arrangement eliminated changes in operational command and control; however, it is interesting to note that this is not the standard method for routine SEAL platoon deployments. The in-theater naval special warfare unit, NSWU-8, had command and control of two SEAL platoons but was not initially involved in planning, as were many other in-theater commands, for security reasons.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* This was one of the first times that all special forces operated under a joint special operations task force (JSOTF). There are grounds to question whether the commander, JTF understood the tactics, techniques, and capabilities of naval special warfare, or if the naval special warfare community was attempting to produce a package that resembled what was familiar and marketable to the JTF. There is also evidence that the commander's intent was never fully understood or was confusing. Some of the research indicated that the mission was simply to deny use of the runway, not the more difficult mission to seize it; and to simply destroy the aircraft, not the more demanding task of disabling (the plan called for puncturing the Learjet's tires) without destroying it.<sup>13</sup>

The mission was also a new role for SEALs, one that required new tactics (urban warfare) and a new command and control structure that understood naval special warfare forces and how to plan for and maintain their relative advantage during the assault. The lessons learned at Paitilla for the naval special warfare community are very similar to the lessons learned by the

JSOTF in Somalia, TF Ranger. In Somalia, SOF discovered that “force packaging by personnel strength ceilings--instead of unit integrity and task force capability--can limit important capabilities.”<sup>14</sup> At Paitilla, SOF discovered that simplicity, one of the principles of war, is relative. A more simple plan for the JTF staff, having the SEALs insert over the beach, was a more difficult mission for the assaulting force because it limited their ability to adjust to a changing time schedule and forced them to conduct a mission that was at the edge of their doctrine (multiple platoon operations).

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* There is not enough data to indicate exactly how the mission was planned, especially at the tactical level and it is not known exactly how much input for planning was allowed at the platoon commander level and below. At least one part of the plan, rehearsals, involved all the personnel employed in the mission.<sup>15</sup>

#### Dessert Storm: Theater Special Operations Command

*Origins of roles and missions.* USCENTCOM did not originally invite SOCCENT to participate in Desert Storm. It was only after SOCCENT convinced USCINCCENT that SOF could contribute to the CSAR effort that they were allowed to deploy. The prior case studies showed naval special warfare and SOF's roles and missions as reactive to situations that required their unique capabilities. In Desert Storm we see a case where SOF was proactive; that is, going forward and explaining to the commander that “this is what we can do for you.”

There are two major reasons why this may have been the situation. The first is that from the start Desert Storm was the conventional fight, the “good fight,” that the military was trained, equipped, and prepared to conduct. Conventional commanders were given the time and location for establishing forces in-theater and the commanders could determine exactly when and how to start their battles. The second reason is attributable to the fact that USCENTCOM had a theater

SOC that could provide the staff expertise required to identify the voids in the conventional plans and proactively provide concepts of employment; for example CSAR, coalition warfare, and deception operations. The SOC could also draw from a wide variety of organic capabilities to organize and assign forces to support these missions. Thus the source of naval special warfare's roles and missions in Desert Storm were primarily self-generated.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* The chain of command for naval special warfare forces assigned to SOCCENT was very clear. NSWTG/CENT assigned platoons to various NSWTUs and was OPCON to SOCCENT. However, the relationship between NSWTG/CENT and naval special warfare forces deployed in support of NAVCENT was not formalized and there was no mechanism to coordinate target priorities, intelligence, and mission taskings. Also, if SOCCENT supported NAVCENT with forces, it could potentially reduce SOCCENT's flexibility to respond to a CINCCENT mission that required naval special warfare forces. This situation prevented NSWTG/CENT from doing more missions in support of the Navy.<sup>16</sup>

*Avoid frequent changes in operational command.* Naval Special Warfare Group 1 deployed as NSWTG/CENT. Most commanders of the NSWTUs that supported NSWTG/CENT were commanding officers of west coast SEAL Teams. This eliminated changes in operational command and control; however, it is interesting to note that this is not the standard method for deploying SEAL platoons or special boat unit detachments. In fact, NSWTG/CENT should be considered an ad hoc command and control organization. Much of NSWTG's success was a result of the time given to organize, plan, coordinate, and rehearse prior to execution.<sup>17</sup>

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* NSWTG/CENT strongest point was its excellent staff experience. The staff detailed guidelines for the command and staff decision making process which clearly detailed the requirements for planning. These guidelines ensured

that each mission was conducted in a maritime environment, at the single platoon or squad level, supported the CINC's campaign plan, and had a high probability for success.<sup>18</sup>

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* Research found that, because most missions were self-generated, personnel employed were thoroughly involved in the complete planning.

### Assured Response and the Algerian Resupply Mission

SOF received taskings to support the Assured Response and the Algerian resupply missions for three primary reasons. First, SOF provided unique capabilities not found in other forces, primarily Air Force and Army special operations aircraft and disciplined troops that could operate in a turbulent or unsure environment. Second, the forces could arrive quickly, as the Assured Response mission, and expand the theater commander's area of influence with assets such as aerial refueling and satellite communications. Or, as in the Algerian resupply mission, in politically sensitive environments with a force that would not draw a large amount of attention. Finally, in each case, SOF provided a senior officer who could take tactical and operational control of the various forces assigned--units that through routine training and integration produced a larger synergistic and cohesive force that could operate in a politically sensitive area.

*Provide for a clear chain of command.* Both Assured Response and the Algerian resupply mission provided for a clear chain of command. During Assured Response the theater SOC exercised control of special operations forces, a majority of whom were stationed in Europe and OPCON to SOCEUR or had worked previously together. The Algerian resupply mission brought together forces that had completed an integrated pre-deployment work-up under the command of a single commanding officer.

*Avoid frequent changes in operational command.* Naval special warfare forces did not change operational command during Assured Response. In the Algerian resupply mission, elements of the naval special warfare units changed operational control from the supported battle group commander to the naval special warfare task group. The naval special warfare commander left a residual force with the supported battle group. Also the units that changed operational control were not going to an ad hoc command but to a command they had trained with for six month prior to deployment.

*Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise.* Both staffs provided excellent staff experience and expertise.

*Personnel employed are involved in the complete planning.* Again both staffs involved the personnel employed in the operation throughout the complete planing process.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05.3, *Joint Special Operations Operational Procedures* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 25 August 1993), D-3.

<sup>2</sup>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-02, *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 8 October 1992), II-3.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace," *RUSI, Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 119 (March 1974): 3.

<sup>4</sup>Dale Andradé et al., *A History of Naval Special Warfare: World War II to Panama* Parts I and II (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress July 1992), 205.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce P. Dyer, Captain United States Navy, Retired, telephonic interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 17 March 1997 (Hereafter noted as the Dyer, interview).

<sup>6</sup>Dyer, interview.

<sup>7</sup>T. L. Bosilevac, *SEALs* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990), 179.

<sup>8</sup>Bosilevac, 179; and Dyer, interview. Captain Dyer explained during the interview that the platoon commander was "king of the outfit." The problem was that the platoon commander did not have a sophisticated feel as to how they fit into the whole picture, they did not even know what the issues were." The senior naval special warfare representatives were usually second tour SEALs who stayed in Saigon and kept COMNAVFORV informed on the missions of the various

platoons. The platoons, according to Dyer, would only hear from their staff when they either received a "BZ"--naval terminology for job well done--or when they flew down after a platoon ran into trouble. It was his feeling that the war, for the SEAL platoons, was run on a fragmented basis.

<sup>9</sup>Dale Andradé, "Swamp Warriors" *Vietnam* (April 1990), 35.

<sup>10</sup>Dyer, interview.

<sup>11</sup>Edward G. Winters and Kent A. Paro, "The Misuse of Special Operations Forces" (Thesis, Master of Arts in National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School, 1994), 42.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>13</sup>Winters and Paro: 50; and Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 119-120.

<sup>14</sup>United States Special Operations Command, USSOCOM Publication 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War* (25 January 1996), 3-15.

<sup>15</sup>McConnell, 55. McConnell indicates that the commanding officer of SEAL Team 4 had "no choice but to train his people for the operation plan that his superiors had personally written and had also personally walked through the critical briefing process with Special Operations Command, prior to the formalizing of OPLAN Blue Spoon."

<sup>16</sup>Larry Metzler, Captain, United States Navy, Chief, Programs Division (SOJ8-P), United States Special Operations Command, interview by author, 31 January 1997, Notes, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida (hereafter noted as the Metzler, interview).

<sup>17</sup>Metzler, interview.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* Commander, NSWTG/CENT used the lessons learned by naval special warfare during the Just Cause Paitilla airport operation as a backdrop for the selection of mission guidance.

<sup>19</sup>Captain Pete Toennies, United States Navy, Chief of Staff, Naval Special Warfare Command, "Resupply of AMEMBASSY Algeria, [1996]," (facsimile), Author's collection.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*sim·ple* *adj.* -pler, -plest [ME <Ofr. < Lat. *Simplus*.] 1. Having or composed of only one thing or part. 2. Not complex. 3. Without additions or modifications.

*flex·i·ble* *adj.* 1. Capable of being bent or flexed. 2. Susceptible to influence or persuasion. 3. Responsive to change.<sup>2</sup>

Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary

Chapter four's analysis reveals three sources that influenced or created new roles and missions for naval special warfare. These sources are high level political or military intervention; the military's attempts to quickly get the doctrine "right" during times of conflict; and requirements to provide capabilities that fill gaps along the fault-lines of inter-service, interagency, or international responsibilities. The analysis also revealed two basic requirements for effective and efficient command and control of naval special warfare forces. The first requirement is a command and control structure that can coordinate and integrate with conventional and unconventional assets in order to provide sufficient support during the planning and execution of missions. The second requirement is a formalized mechanism to ensure that employed forces are designed, organized, and integrated in support of the theater commander's operational or strategic objectives. The study concludes that past commanders most effectively exercised these principles by assigning in theater naval special warfare assets under the command and control of a single, forward deployed senior officer responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of naval special warfare taskings.

The case studies that did not employ a single commander concept, specifically Vietnam, exercised these principles primarily through informal mechanisms, achieving marginal operational and strategic results.

In each of the cases studied we see a pattern in the development of naval special warfare's command and control. A pattern that progresses from independent fragmented units, such as NCDUs and SEAL platoons to single integrated groups, such as UDT and theater SOCs, or NSWTG-SIXTHFLT. The initial NCDUs that deployed to England in support of Operation Overlord did not have senior officer representation. NCDUs overcame this deficiency through creative training and rehearsals, and by exploiting the prior combat experiences of its junior leadership. Later, just prior to Operation Overlord, the Navy corrected this deficiency by tasking several mid-ranking officers to coordinate intelligence and other planning requirements for the various NCDUs. The deficiencies caused by the lack of senior officer representation also caused many problems for early UDT operations, primarily at Saipan and Leyte, and eventually compelled Admiral Turner to establish ComUDT. Admiral Turner's establishment of ComUDT created a forward deployed, central location for the planning, coordination, and execution of UDT operations. ComUDT also created a formal mechanism for coordinating conventional supporting assets, primarily fire support; and designated a single officer who was personally responsible for supervising and organizing the planning, rehearsals, integration, and ultimate execution of UDT missions in support of the amphibious commander's operational plan.

During the Korean War, UDT did not initially have a commanding officer in-theater. As a result, UDT reluctantly conducted its initial raids ashore without much success. Later, after the deployment of a UDT commanding officer--who understood the capabilities and limitations of his forces--into the theater, planners combined the skills inherent in UDT and

its supporting naval platforms with those capabilities inherent in the Marines, forming a highly successful joint force, the SOG. Another Korean War example of the principles in action was the assignment of liaison officers to coordinate the dissemination of intelligence produced during covert operations. The incorporation of liaison officers within the command structures of covert operations greatly contributed to the quality and timeliness of intelligence, however, the Navy never established a similar formal mechanism for the planning and coordinating of UDT support to covert operations. The informal relationship that resulted caused several ineffective or inefficient operations.

Later, in Vietnam, small sixteen-man platoons and single-man PRU advisors developed sophisticated intelligence networks that greatly contributed to the successful conduct of follow-on SEAL operations. Platoons and advisors passed details on this intelligence network, and many of the other operational skills developed during the several years SEALs worked in Vietnam, to follow-on platoons. Also, as a result of their six-month-long tours in-theater, SEALs conducted multiple deployments to Vietnam, and over the several years of the conflict, created a cadre of seasoned veterans who imparted a wealth of knowledge throughout the small community. Finally, supporting assets, such as SBUs, HAL-3, and VAL-4, were readily available in-theater, and normally coordinated face-to-face at the platoon commander level. As a result of these factors, SEAL platoons in Vietnam did not require centralized planning to coordinate their missions. The resulting command and control structure, and philosophy, easily supported the highly decentralized planning and execution of SEAL operations and resulted in great tactical successes. However, these great tactical successes eventually became the albatross that prevented the evolution of a centralized command structure for naval special warfare operations and ultimately prevented planners from tapping the full potential of the force.

The next two case studies occurred about the time that naval special warfare was coming under the combatant command of USSOCOM. The first operation, Earnest Will, demonstrates the unique capabilities inherent in special operations forces and how planners can integrate these capabilities into the supported commander's campaign plan. It also illustrates why SOF's command and control structures need to make its unique capabilities available to military planners as they plan and coordinate the employment of conventional and unconventional forces. The second operation, Just Cause, demonstrates the requirement for a staff that completely understands the capabilities and limitations of the forces employed.

The last major employment of naval special warfare forces, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, demonstrates the capabilities of a fully established theater SOC. The command and control structure established to support Operation Desert Shield/Storm was, like the structure that supported Operation Just Cause, an ad hoc organization. Although an ad hoc organization, the NSWG that supported Desert Shield/Storm had several advantages. The first was time. The NSWG had over six months to deploy and establish itself, organize its forces, plan and coordinated taskings; and then, conduct training and rehearsals in support of those missions. The second advantage was the NSWG's well-established operational mission criteria, which ensured potential missions were within the capabilities of assigned forces and integrated into the overall campaign plan. The final advantage that the NSWG had in Operation Desert Shield/Storm was the ability to be proactive in supporting the theater commander's campaign plan, vice reactive, such as Operation Just Cause's Paitilla Airfield mission or had Iraqi forces attacked earlier.

The study discovered that many of naval special warfare missions, since the establishment of USSOCOM and the theater SOC's, have been similar proactive taskings.

This phenomenon can be attributable to the establishment of USSOCOM and theater SOC's "coming of age."<sup>3</sup> MFP-11 has given USSOCOM and theater SOC's greater flexibility in training, equipping, and employing their forces. This capability has enabled USSOCOM and its theater SOC's to monitor and maintain strong and viable forces that meet the requirements of theater combatant commanders. It has also has enabled SOF to look into the future, study the sources of special operations roles and missions, and develop TTPs, doctrine, and a strategy for the future employment of its forces; and support the strategy by managing its own research, development, and procurement of special operations-peculiar items and posturing of its forces.

Theater SOC commanders and their staffs have matured under the influence of MFP-11, providing the theater with a flexible capability to maintain and develop SOF capabilities; and plan, coordinate, and conduct SOF missions. As a result, SOF has entered several of the past conflicts with forces that are properly resourced with relevant doctrine, trained personnel, excellent equipment, and sufficient budgets to execute assigned roles in support of theater campaign plans.<sup>4</sup> Finally, as demonstrated during Operation Assured Response and the Algerian resupply mission, the development of a strong theater SOC, along with the establishment of NSWTG-SIXTHFLT, has given the theater commander a formalized mechanism to exploit a staff with an extensive depth of knowledge, experience, and expertise in special operations.

The establishment of NSWTG-SIXTHFLT, a forward deployed senior naval special warfare officer, exercises the two principles of effective and efficient command and control of naval special warfare forces identified in the study. First, it establishes a centralized point for coordinating and integrating supporting assets, such as intelligence, fire support, insertion and extraction platforms, and communications. Second, it provides a formalized

mechanism--a staff with an extensive depth of knowledge, experience, and expertise in special operations and naval special warfare--that ensures naval special warfare forces are designed, organized, and employed to the achieve commander's operational and strategic objectives.

A single commander concept also provides a clear and unambiguous naval special warfare chain of command, throughout the operational continuum, that eliminates the transition to ad hoc command structures in times of crisis. Changes in operational command are not eliminated. However, as was demonstrated during Operation Earnest Will, SOF can operate under other commanders and, SOF should work under the commander that can provide the best possible tactical command and control support for the mission. The key is to ensure that, during changes in operational control, a qualified staff is available to advise the commander and ensure assigned missions match the capabilities of the supporting force. Next, the single commander concept provides the fleet commander with a senior officer, who has spent his entire career conducting naval special warfare, and a *battle staff* (emphasis added), organized to exclusively support assigned units. A senior naval special warfare officer combined with a dedicated staff would greatly increase the available experience and expertise required to plan, conduct, and support naval special warfare operations. Finally the senior officer and his staff would ensure that personnel employed are involved in both the decision making process and the complete planning process, thus ensuring that all operational and supporting requirements, and mission capabilities are matched to those of the employed force.

In conclusion, the establishment of a single forward deployed commander provides simple and flexible command and control structure. The command and control structure is simple because it does not change its basic structure in times of crisis--it is "already there."<sup>5</sup>

The command and control structure is flexible because it provides a solid foundation and an experienced staff from which to flex and deliberately respond to change.

The problem is that naval special warfare forces still have long standing traditional roles and missions that support the fleet, in addition to supporting special operations taskings in support of the SOC. This problem, as described by former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, makes “Naval Special Warfare Forces. . .unique among Special Operations Forces (SOF) given the extent to which they are integrated with [naval] conventional operations and their heavy reliance on conventional naval platforms.” Secretary Weinberger’s concern was “not. . .to drive a wedge between the SEALs and the Fleet.” However, if fleet commanders continue to maintain single naval special warfare elements, without formal mechanisms for coordinating support among the other naval special warfare assets in theater, they are in essence driving a wedge between themselves and the complete benefit of SOF’s capabilities.

Naval special warfare “Vision 2000” has recognized this requirement and assigned a single commander under the operational control of the fleet commander. “Vision 2000” also allows for a formalized mechanism, an additional duty responsibility of the NSWTF to the NSWTF, to coordinate with SOC forces. In essence, “Vision 2000” provides the theater SOC commander, and the theater fleet commander, with the combined capabilities of “blue” and “purple” naval special warfare assets, and most importantly, the theater SOC’s assets, all unique assets that provide “military capabilities not available elsewhere in the armed forces.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Webster’s New Riverside University Dictionary* (Boston: The Riverside Publishing Company), 1085.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>3</sup>It may also be attributable to the relatively short time that USSOCOM has existed.

<sup>4</sup>Henry H. Shelton, "Coming of Age: Theater Special Operations Commands," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 14 (Winter 1996-7): 52.

<sup>5</sup>United States Special Operations Command, "SOF Vision 2020," 4.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

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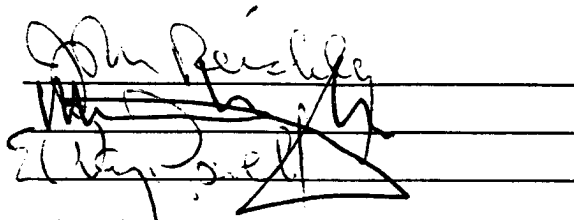
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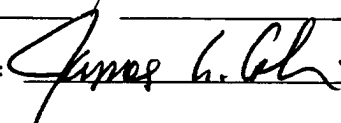
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